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MiddCORE to partner with OpenAI for J-Term program

By NORAH KHAN
News Editor

MiddCORE, the college's experiential learning program, recently announced its partnership with OpenAI for its 2026 J-Term session. Serving as a credit-bearing J-Term class, MiddCORE's winter program requires a competitive application process and involves working with a company partner to take on challenges and foster leadership and problem-solving skills.

The partnership with OpenAI comes at a time when Middlebury is reckoning with the use and impact of artificial intelligence (AI) on campus. The Middlebury Handbook currently allows the use of AI when permitted by an instructor but does not provide any further guidance, and professors are navigating the gray space of endorsing or outlawing AI in their classrooms. On Tuesday, the college Helpdesk sent an email to students acknowledging the AI tools now available with Middlebury credentials through Google and Microsoft; it asks students to consider data security, privacy and ethics in their use. A more robust "governance and communication framework" for AI use is in

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SCOTT CENTER RELOCATES AS CENTER FOR NONPROLIFERATION STUDIES OPENS VERMONT OFFICE

NORAH KHAN/ THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

The Scott Center recently relocated to its former location at 135 South Main Street, across from the Axinn Center for the Humanities.

By MAYA ALEXANDER
Editor at Large

In September, the Scott Center for Spiritual and Religious Life relocated from its temporary location at 46 South Street to its original space in the Hathaway House at 135 South Main Street. In 2021, the center was displaced to make room for student quarantine rooms due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

In place of the former location will be the first Vermont office for the James Martin Center for Nonproliferation Studies (CNS), which already has offices in Monterey, Calif., Washington, D.C. and Vienna, Austria. The dedicated Vermont building marks the next step in a nearly two-decade long expansion of CNS. The official launch will take place in the spring after 46 South Street undergoes routine maintenance, according to several sources.

Mark Orten, dean of spiritual and religious life and director of the Scott Center, expressed excitement that the center is moving back to its original location. An official dedication will take place at the house on Monday, Oct. 14 from 4:30-6:00 p.m., where college President Ian Baucom will deliver remarks.

"We are now so much easier to find — next door to Admissions, across the street from Axinn. We have a very cozy living room with a fireplace that will be operational soon. A dedicated prayer and meditation room upstairs provides rare and needed space on campus," he wrote in an email to The Campus. "The college's special interest housing for multi-faith and no faith intentional living and learning — the MOSAIC Interfaith House — is next door."

He also shared that spiritual and religious life is currently thriving on campus, which will only continue with the relocation of the Scott Center.

"Persisting over the last decade through budget cuts and staff reductions and facility relocations, the Center

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Faculty, students awarded Fulbright grants despite cuts and delays

By NOOR KHAN
Layout Editor

In May and June, two Middlebury professors and seven graduating seniors or recent alumni were selected for U.S. Fulbright Program awards. The U.S. Fulbright Program is an international academic exchange program that awards U.S. citizens with grants to teach, conduct research or carry out professional projects abroad.

Fulbright applicants faced uncertainty in the spring over their impending award decisions after programs for several countries reduced their capacities for this year in anticipation of the Trump administration eliminating U.S. government funding. Before award notifications went out, the U.S. State Department canceled the Fulbright scholarships of almost 200 American professors and researchers, about a fifth of the scholars the Fulbright board had approved over the winter. The cancellations appeared to target research projects focused on climate change, gender and race.

Student and professor

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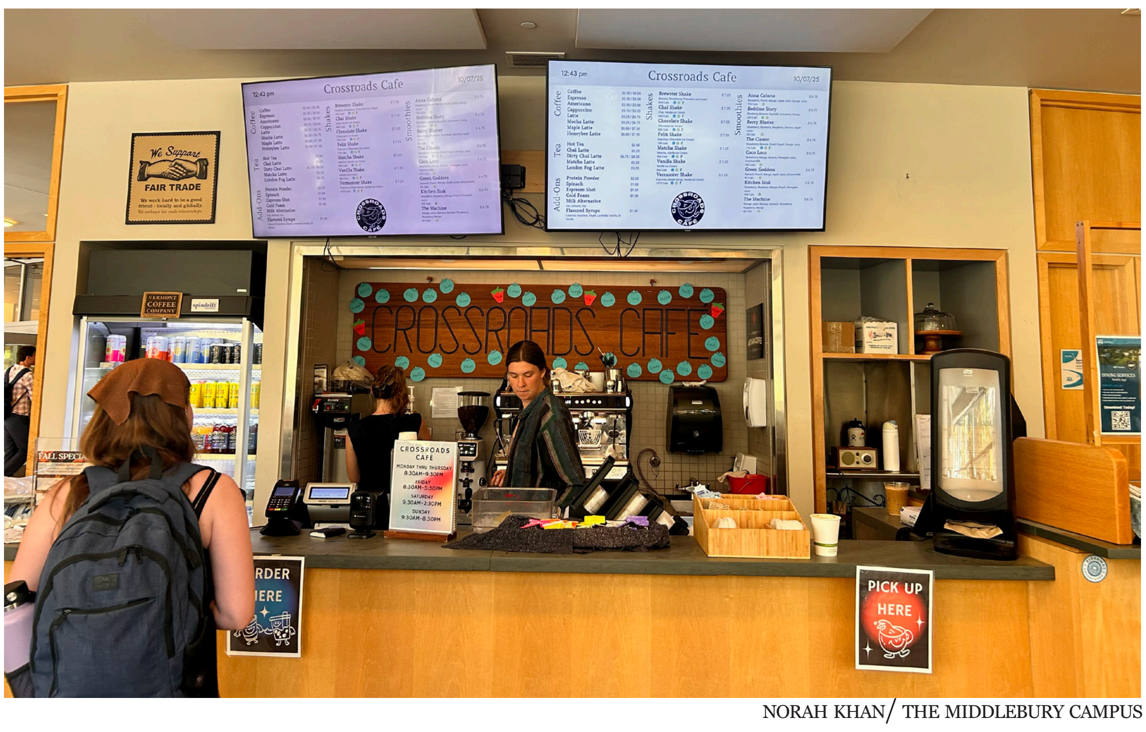
NEW BEANS & BETTER MACHINES: CROSSROADS CAFÉ BREWS UP CHANGES



NORAH KHAN/ THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

While alternative milk options, such as oat and almond milk, used to cost $1.25 at the college's student-run café, they now come without an additional charge.

By MET LY
Contributing Writer

Crossroads Café has brewed up major changes this semester: expanded weekend hours, the removal of the alternative milk surcharge, upgrades to aging equipment and a switch from dark roast to a medium coffee blend.

The café is now open on Saturdays from 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. and on Sundays from 9:30 a.m.-8:30 p.m. The decision to increase hours, according to staff, was made in response to feedback from both baristas and customers.

"The four student managers, they lead the challenge down there," Assistant Manager of Retail Foods Andy Davidson said in an interview with The Campus. He is the liaison between the student Crossroads managers and Middlebury Dining Services.

Crossroads managers Jayda Murray '25.5 and Monica Cuellar '26 said they hope the longer weekend hours prevent the overcrowding of the cafe that has presented difficulties in previous semesters.

"I worked that [Sunday] shift my sophomore year, [it was] super packed," Cuellar said in an interview with The Campus. "So, I feel like starting a little earlier on Sunday and also being open on Saturday gives us a chance to spread people

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KNOLL HOSTS THIRD ANNUAL MID-AUTUMN HARVEST FESTIVAL

COURTESY PHOTO/ JOSÉ ANTONIO HERNÁNDEZ MORALES

The Knoll welcomed cultural clubs to host activities celebrating the Mid-Autumn Festival.

By KAI ARROWOOD
Contributing Writer

On Oct. 4, the Knoll hosted its third annual Mid-Autumn Harvest Festival, a celebration of Asian culture that attracted students and their families to the sunlit outdoor space. More than a dozen student organizations set up tables for the event, offering cultural activities, handmade crafts, food and performances.

Traditionally a time for family reunions, the Mid-Autumn Festival aligned perfectly with Fall Family Weekend. For international students whose families could not travel to Vermont, the event offered a sense of home and belonging within the Middlebury community.

"Chinese students often don't have family able to visit, so it represents being part of a larger family," Chinese Society Treasurer Qianhao Yang '28 said.

"[The] Mid-Autumn Festival is one of the most important celebrations in Chinese culture," Chinese Department Teaching Assistant Leslie Liu said in an interview with The Campus. "The festival's focus on harvest and family reunion makes it an ideal theme for a heartwarming family weekend in this golden season, where loved ones can gather and share the joy of this

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NEWS

"Ladder or Lottery?": Gary Hoover asks Middlebury to rethink economic promises

By TING CUI

Approximately 50 students filled Twilight Auditorium last Thursday afternoon to hear economist Gary Hoover

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Vermont Way Foods signs Milk with Dignity agreement

By ELISABETH DELLIT

Local author and illustrator brings imagination to life

By MANDY BERGHELA

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What the Middlebury College Republicans got wrong about free speech

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The value of physical media: Artificial intelligence and art

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By NICK PENNIMAN

"The Truth Remixed" stirs up laughter and reflection

By ELIZABETH SHIERMAN

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Middlebury sailing club hosts Stuart Walker Trophy

By SIMON SCHMIEDER

Field hockey falls to Bowdoin in shootout

By HANNA FREUND

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“LADDER OR LOTTERY?” GARY HOOVER ASKS MIDDLEBURY TO RETHINK ECONOMIC PROMISES

By TING CUI
Business Director

Approximately 50 students filled Twilight Auditorium last Thursday afternoon to hear economist Gary Hoover argue that America’s promise of economic mobility may be more of a lottery than a ladder. The talk, part of the D.K. Smith Economic Lecture Series, featured Hoover promoting his book “Ladder or Lottery: Economic Promises and the Reality of Who Gets Ahead.” With his baritone voice carrying a hint of a southern accent, the Executive Director of the Murphy Institute at Tulane University held the audience’s attention for an hour. College President Ian Baucom was among those in attendance.

“Is the lower rung on the economic ladder simply a choice?” Hoover asked, presenting the central question that inspired his research. “We’re told that poverty is just a choice, that people are where they are because they choose to be there.”

“Is the lower rung on the economic ladder simply a choice?” Hoover asked, presenting the central question that inspired his research.

Hoover defined these “ladders” as social contracts: society’s promises that specific actions will lead to upward economic mobility. Education, healthcare, entrepreneurship, military service and family formation, he argued, all carry hidden flaws that prevent many Americans from advancing up the economic ladder despite following the supposed rules. He also divided Americans into two groups: the “deserving” poor, whom society blames for not following the prescribed path, and the “undeserving” poor, who did everything right but still didn’t climb.

He illustrated income inequality’s growth with stark statistics. In 1970, the lowest 20% of Americans held 4.1% of income while the highest 20% held 42.4%. By 2022, those figures shifted to 3.5% and 50.7% respectively, meaning that over half of all U.S. income now concentrates in the top fifth of the population.

With quick wit and a knack for analogy, Hoover then illustrated the shortcomings of conventional “ladder” metaphors.

Sometimes, he explained, the rungs on an economic ladder are broken or missing entirely. Education may be compulsory and free, but quality varies so dramatically by zip code that straight-A students from some schools aren’t equivalent to their peers from better-resourced districts.

Drawing on his three years of military service, Hoover shared how veterans’ benefits came with hidden obstacles, such as mandatory $100 monthly paycheck deductions that hit hard when his total pay was only $330, or bureaucratic mismatches between the U.S. Department of Veteran Affairs (VA) payment schedules and universities’ tuition deadlines.

He linked past movements from Occupy Wall Street to the Arab Spring to the breakdown of social contracts, arguing that protests erupt when people do what society asks but remain stuck, feeling undeserving of their economic position. Hoover predicted two coming battles: artificial intelligence and affordable housing.

Hoover’s central argument relied on an engineering principle: a properly designed system must produce the same outputs from the same inputs, repeatedly and predictably

With 64 million Americans in poverty, he argued that it is statistically impossible that none of them put in the same effort as successful individuals.

“If you design a system, that system must always, if you put the same inputs into it, it must repeatedly and predictably give you the same output,” Hoover explained. “If it doesn’t, you have a design flaw.”

Even if the system works perfectly and the problem is “user error” — people not knowing how to use the economic system — then 15% user error in any other product would trigger an immediate recall. He used the example of children sticking forks into electrical outlets; child-protective devices exist because we recognize that design must account for human behavior, not simply blame users for misuse.

Ladder or Lottery?: Economic Promises and the Reality of Who Gets Ahead

TING CUI/ THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Students, faculty, and community members gathered last Thursday to hear Gary Hoover of Tulane University deliver the annual David K. Smith lecture.

“If you design a system, that system must always, if you put the same inputs into it, it must repeatedly and predictably give you the same output,” Hoover explained. “If it doesn’t, you have a design flaw.”

“If 15% of people driving onto a bridge keep running into the support pillars… soon enough the bridge is going to fall,” Hoover said. “And then none of us are going to have it.”

When pressed on solutions during the Q&A session, Hoover offered two options: Tell people the truth that economic mobility is largely a lottery, or fix the system by going “all in” on making the social contract work as promised. He cited Medicaid as a program that lifted many elderly Americans out of poverty, but said most reforms have been half-hearted.

Questions from students and faculty pushed Hoover on policy prescriptions, from expanding Medicaid to addressing zoning laws that limit housing supply. While he responded vaguely and offered few definitive fixes, Hoover returned to his larger point that economic systems must be redesigned when too many users stumble, and that acknowledging the system is broken is the first step to fixing it.

Professor of Economics Caitlin Myers asked what small liberal arts colleges should do as stewards of the social contract. Hoover urged academics to “leave the ivory tower” and better articulate their value beyond job preparation, emphasizing the importance of education in reducing crime, increasing civic engagement and strengthening democracy.

“We have to show that there’s a value in learning, there’s a value in science,” Hoover said in a post-talk interview with The Campus. “Because here’s the thing that I find interesting: The groups don’t talk to each other. The ultra wealthy are talking down to the ultra poor, and the ultra poor are just trying to survive day to day. They’re really sort of disconnected.”

“The groups don’t talk to each other. The ultra wealthy are talking down to the ultra poor, and the ultra poor are just trying to survive day to day. They’re really sort of disconnected.”

Student reactions were mixed. Students appreciated Hoover’s clear articulation of the problem, but wanted to hear more concrete solutions.

“It felt a little bit sad, almost, and informative, but also hard to take to the next step of action for myself,” Truett Ramsey ’25.5 said, noting the challenge of feeling powerless as a young person facing housing and AI crises.

Ramsey also observed that Middlebury’s political climate made the talk feel less provocative than it might have in Hoover’s usual Southern audiences. “He probably gets a lot more pushback [elsewhere] and therefore he might not have even understood that we had accepted to such an extent what he was saying, then looked for that next step.”

Earlier that day, Hoover had led a more technical faculty discussion. The afternoon lecture was intentionally designed to engage students from any major.

“The students here are way more engaged than a lot of places where kids are all just half asleep or fooling around,” Hoover said.

The annual series honors the late Professor David K. Smith ’42, a Vermont native, Navy veteran and Harvard-trained economist. He taught at Middlebury for nearly four decades, including 15 years as chair of the Economics Department. After his retirement in 1988, a lecture series was endowed to ensure an annual forum on applied economics.

Scott Center relocates as Center for Nonproliferation Studies opens Vermont office

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continues to offer vital resources to the campus community, increasingly in demand, and the restoration of the location at Hathaway House is an important part of the provision it can make,” he wrote.

Avery Goldstein ’26.5, treasurer of the Quaker Club, expressed some sadness over leaving the old location behind, but is happy that the new location is closer to the center of campus.

“More people can come to our Sunday meetings, which is exciting. I’m excited to make the new Scott Center our little Sunday home,” Goldstein said.

CNS is one of the self-sustaining programs at the Middlebury Institute for International Studies (MIIS) that will continue after June 2027. Middlebury undergraduate students have been able to work remotely for CNS from the Vermont campus since 2020, according to Jessica Varnum, deputy director of CNS. The office’s opening, along with a partnership with the Rohatyn Center for Global Affairs, will allow for more collaboration between Vermont students and the program.

“For a number of years, we’ve been looking at how could we formalize those opportunities in the Vermont location, because it’s obviously less than ideal to have students just working out of their dorm rooms or in library spaces. They don’t get the benefits of collaboration on site together with the other students and with faculty and staff that they might be working with on projects,” Varnum said.

Students who work with CNS engage in research projects utilizing technologies such as satellite imagery, animation, 3D modeling and open-source data analytics. According to Varnum, establishing a formal location for these students to gather, collaborate and receive in-person mentoring from CNS experts has been in the works for several years.

“In addition to providing a physical location for students, a Vermont office will enable us to start basing some of our experts in Vermont to actually work in person with students, as well as to have visiting experts from our various offices come in for various numbers of weeks or months at a time or a semester at a time to be able to be in residence and work directly with the students,” Varnum said.

In a news announcement this past August, CNS founder and director Dr. William Potter expressed excitement for this next step.

“We have seen in the past how effective Middlebury students can be as research assistants and collaborators, and we welcome this opportunity to build a more direct partnership,” Potter said.

According to Varnum, the CNS mission statement includes training and educating the next generation of people that are going to have an impact on policy, as well as providing hands-on experience in the field.

Jack Johnson ’26.5, a research assistant on the CNS new tools team, conducts open-source research with an emphasis on satellite imagery and geospatial analysis to analyze specific military capabilities of adversary countries. He believes the new office can richen students’ skills outside the classroom.

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NORAH KHAN/ THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

On Monday, Oct. 14, an official detication and celebration of the Hathaway house as the Scott Center will take place.

“I hope that the new Vermont office brings greater integration with Middlebury College and enables more students to apply their skills outside of classroom environments to real-world international security research,” Johnson wrote in a message to The Campus.

KNOLL HOSTS THIRD ANNUAL MID-AUTUMN HARVEST FESTIVAL

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traditional celebration."

For cultural clubs, the festival was a forum to celebrate and share their traditions. The Chinese Department and Chinese Society organized a series of activities, ranging from riddles and pitch-pot games to lantern making and distributing mooncakes from across China.

"Thanks to the joint effort of volunteers from the Chinese Society and Chinese Department, remarkable planning by the board members, and a generous budget provided by the department, we were able to offer a diverse selection of traditional activities for our guests to have an immersive experience of Mid-Autumn festival celebration in Chinese culture," Liu added.

The Korean-American Student Association (KASA) offered cups of kimchi they had prepared together a week prior, while the Japanese Club (J Club) offered calligraphy, origami lessons and rice cakes attendees could decorate with edible markers.

"It was great, sharing a part of our culture," KASA President Cody Lee '27 said.

Beyond the culinary delicacies, music abounded, with a performance by "The Bobolinks" a capella group and a traditional Korean drumming circle. Shelby Kimmel, associate professor of computer science and instructor of the first-year seminar "Transforming Traditions," directed the drumming, teaching attendees how to use the ornate instruments.

"I loved hearing the music echoing through the hills," Kimmel said. "It was a good welcome."

At a predominantly white institution, events like the Mid-Autumn Festival help Asian students feel included, international or not.

"It's great to see all these families making Asian students feel more welcome," Samantha Benjamin '28, co-president of the Radical Asians Society (RAISINS), said.

RAISINS' table emphasized both social justice and culture, offering mango sago to attendees if they correctly answered social justice trivia. Their table also featured QR codes linking to "Know Your Rights With ICE" webpages.

Other advocacy-oriented organizations were also present, including the Migrant Justice Club and Addison County BIPOC, an organization which since 2020 has fostered a safe space for both community members and students.

Knoll intern Changchang Ma '26 was the mastermind behind the event and began preparing for it in July. She coordinated with the facilities team to ensure the lawn would be mowed on time, with Middlebury dining to set up the tables, and of course with the college's plethora of student clubs. Knoll interns welcomed attendees and a shuttle ran between campus and the Knoll to transport students and their families.

Despite the heat, the event was a success, with over 700 attendees and an assortment of delicious food, entertainment and activities.

"I wanted to bring people together," Ma said.

Editor's Note: News Editor Hugo Zhang '28 contributed reporting to this article.

The Knoll welcomed cultural clubs to host activities celebrating the Mid-Autumn Festival.

COURTESY PHOTOS/ JOSÉ ANTONIO HERNÁNDEZ MORALES

New beans & better machines: Crossroads Café brews up changes

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out at different times."

Murray said they also took into consideration a groupchat-wide poll open to all of the baristas to gauge the expansion's feasibility. "It's assessing what we think we might need and we get their [the barista's] opinions," she said.

According to Davidson, traffic on Saturdays has been off to a slow start.

"We're up against nice weather outside, not everybody studies on a Saturday during the day," Davidson said. "There was one Saturday that was a huge athletic day but [I am] hopeful it will pick up once word spreads out, especially through social media."

One of the most noticeable improvements, staff said, has been the addition of a new espresso machine, steam wand and fridge.

Barista Rese Kinney-Bastedo '27, who has worked at Crossroads since her first year, said that the new equipment has made her work less stressful compared to other semesters. She cited the steam wand as an example, noting that for much of last semester the café operated with only one functional wand, leading to frequent backups in orders. With two now in use, service moves much more quickly.

Crossroads regular Nawale Nachula '28 agreed and said the new equipment enhanced her overall experience at the café.

"My daily Matcha Lattes are [now] so much better because of it," Nachula said.

The drop of the $1.25 charge for alternative milk options, such as oat and almond milk, was also a welcomed change partly driven by feedback from student customers communicated through the managers, according to Davidson. Pricing is one of the few aspects of Crossroads dictated by college staff members rather than the student managers.

Davidson said he tries to keep prices comparable to other local cafés.

"I don't want to price everybody out," Davidson said. "A lot of cafés have dropped charges for alternative milk, and the cost of milk is already built into the price."

The managers have also placed a new suggestion box on the cafés counter for community feedback. Murray said they've received numerous positive comments and requests to bring back specialty drinks.

Looking ahead towards the rest of the semester, both student managers expressed optimism about continuing their work with the Crossroads team, something Kinney-Bastedo said was akin to "a big family", as they look back on the role Crossroads have played in their time at Middlebury.

"It's hard working here for three and half years and not having a positive outlook," Murray said. "Amidst all of what feels like chaos, because working at a coffee shop naturally [is] kind of fast paced. You really love it."

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FACULTY, STUDENTS AWARDED FULBRIGHT GRANTS DESPITE CUTS AND DELAYS

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COURTESY PHOTOS

Associate Professor of Political Science Ajay Verghese and Professor of Religion William Waldron won Fulbright fellowships to support their respective research projects in India and Nepal.

applicants from Middlebury, which has historically been a top producer of Fulbrights, experienced “highly unusual” delays in receiving their answers, according to associate dean for fellowships and research Lisa Gates. While semifinalists have typically heard back by mid-March or early April, notifications this year were postponed until May for many. One Middlebury applicant did not hear back until June.

Graduating student applicants usually accept a degree of uncertainty in their plans when applying for Fulbright, Gates said, but the abnormal delays this year amplified this effect and potentially prevented certain students from being able to accept the grant.

Professor of Religion William Waldron spent this past summer on one of two trips to Nepal as a part of his Fulbright scholarship, and Associate Professor of Political Science Ajay Verghese will take two research trips to India for his research beginning next summer. Waldron recalled the expediency needed from his team to get the project underway in under a month from the notification date in early May. Verghese had to push his first trip until next summer since he wasn’t going to be allowed to start research until August of this year.

Both professors expressed surprise that the Fulbright funding came through at all. Regardless, they are enthusiastic about the opportunity to work on their projects.

Waldron’s research in Nepal is the culmination of an 18-year relationship with the Kathmandu Valley region, which began with his first Fulbright scholarship in 2007-2008. It was during that year he met Dr. Naresh Shakya (his then-student), with whom Waldron has maintained a long-term connection over his near-annual trips. Through conversations with Shakya about the loss of artistic traditions in the capital region, Waldron developed an interest in efforts to foster tradition. In particular, Waldron is fascinated by the symbolism of the Five Buddha Families, specifically how contemporary Nepali Buddhists interact with these symbols in their lives.

“It just seemed like a natural project,” Waldron said.

His project requires a multi-pronged effort on the ground in Nepal. For example, part of the project is being carried out in the National Archives by Dr. Shakya’s team of researchers specifically trained in reading the classical hybrid language of the records that use Newar vocabulary in Sanskrit text.

When reflecting on his initial surprise over getting selected for a second Fulbright grant in his career, Waldron said he believes the collaborative aspect of this project to be an important part of why it was chosen.

“I’ve known [Shakya] for a long time, and every time I go there… I have some connection with him and give talks [at his school],” Waldron said “If the whole idea of Fulbright is to invest in long term relationships with people, that’s exactly what’s happening with me, right?”

Verghese, also a second-time Fulbright Scholar after completing his first project in 2017-2018, will spend summer 2026 and 2027 in India to conduct in-depth research on two smaller projects that emerged from a broader one: family gurus and “secular Hindus.” His interest in both topics was sparked by conversations during previous trips to India.

Family gurus are a kind of spiritual teacher, also referred to as “yogis” or “godmen”, that work with families and are often associated with political parties. Verghese said that since this is not a generally well-known topic among American scholars, he plans to spend a month or two shadowing one of these gurus to find out more about their lives and duties. He anticipates some difficulty in finding a guru willing to let a foreign scholar follow them around.

“I’ve talked to colleagues in India, and they said, ‘good luck’, because a lot of those guys might be very reluctant,” Verghese said. “So I think that one will take a lot more work, but also the payoff could be a lot.”

The second project was born out of Verghese’s interactions with younger, affluent people in Delhi who described themselves as “secular Hindus.” He plans on approaching this through interviews and focus groups.

“[They] described themselves as… still Hindu, but in a much more western style, secularized way,” Verghese said. “There wasn’t that much research about them, so I said, ‘Okay, I want to understand this community and this group.’”

Although the long-term future of the Fulbright program is unclear, Verghese expressed a hope that Fulbright’s bilateral nature — exchange between the U.S. and other countries — mitigates the possibility of the program’s funding being revoked.

“There is, I think, more of a built-in mechanism for compromise, and so the U.S. can[not] just unilaterally cut it off without having any ramifications,” he said.

Editor’s Note: News Editor Norah Khan ’27 contributed reporting to this article.

MIDDCORE TO PARTNER WITH OPENAI FOR J-TERM PROGRAM

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progress, the email said.

Rob Moeller, associate professor of psychology and director of MiddCORE, said that finding a company to partner with each year entails cold calling and leveraging pre-existing connections through Middlebury’s alumni network.

OpenAI is an artificial intelligence (AI) company that aims to develop “safe and beneficial” artificial general intelligence, which it defines as AI systems that are generally smarter than humans, according to the company charter. In 2015, now-CEO Sam Altman, Elon Musk and other tech leaders co-founded OpenAI as a non-profit research organization. Now worth $500 billion, it has since made significant advances in large language models (LLMs) and is best known for its LLM ChatGPT.

“I try and get companies that I think our students would most like to work with, and companies that have challenges that I think are engaging and interesting and complicated,” Moeller said.

The company is no stranger to controversy. In 2023, OpenAI’s board of directors announced that it had fired Altman, leading to more than 700 of 770 OpenAI employees signing a letter to board members threatening resignation if Altman was not reinstated. Within the same week, all but one board member resigned and a new board was created with Altman returning to his position.

OpenAI has since faced numerous copyright violation lawsuits that accuse it of reproducing work without permission. It has also been accused of using celebrities’ voices without their consent within its ChatGPT systems, and former employees have decried the lack of accountability in AI companies, calling for stronger whistleblower protections.

Numerous reports have identified the data centers that house AI servers as large consumers of water and electricity, producers of electronic waste and significant contributors to greenhouse gas emissions.

The collaboration marks a shift in reputation and size from previous partnerships. Last year, MiddCORE worked with Athletic Brewing Co., an alumni-founded company that specializes in non-alcoholic beer products. In the past, the program has partnered with companies such as New Balance, LEGO, Patagonia and L.L.Bean.

“We work with the company to develop a case study, and we come up with a very specific challenge that all students from any major would be able to do. A good case, ideally, is a case that requires a liberal arts education to work through,” Moeller said.

These cases are actual business problems the companies may face. The 40 students in the program are joined by approximately the same number of mentors, composed of alumni and people connected to the college, to solve strategic challenges.

“No one in the room, including the company, the consultants that are working with students, the professors, no one knows what the answer is. So, it’s a really unique place to be,” Moeller said.

In his own classes, Moeller invites his students to explore the benefits of AI tools.

“My approach this fall with AI has been to encourage students to use it, to share their prompts, and to have discussion in class about how to use it to have a tool that promotes learning and realizing that it’s easy to use it in ways that circumvent learning, but it can also be a really powerful tool to increase learning,” Moeller said. “I join my students in trying to figure out how to do that best.”

MiddCORE interns Weronika Wozny ’27 and Jason Chiappinelli ’27 are aware of the concerns surrounding AI, but are optimistic for the partnership’s impact.

“I’m excited to see what the scope is going to be and how people are going to engage with it. If it is approached properly, it can be a good lesson on the positive incorporation of AI within the academic environment, because I think there are a lot of uses of it that can be good,” Wozny said.

“There is space for valid criticisms, but AI is going to be a fact of life, so it’s about understanding what it is going to be here,” Chiappinelli said.

OpenAI’s controversies won’t limit the goals of the program.

“I want students to know that they are graduating into a world where there are going to be a lot of tough decisions to be made, a lot of challenges that need to be solved, and are going to be equipped to do it. We are hoping that they will lean into, rather than withdraw from, the challenge,” Moeller said.

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By MANDY BERGHELA
Managing Editor

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Ashley Wolff's Children's Books
RESIST!
Ashley Wolff

COURTESY PHOTO / ASHLEY WOLFF
Children's book author and illustrator Ashley Wolff at her studio. Wolff has illustrated more than 55 titles over her four-decade career.

Ashley Wolff's introduction to art came early. "I was always surrounded by art and drawing things," she said. "I always knew I wanted to be an artist."

That determination carried her from sketchbooks as a child in Middlebury to a career as a beloved children's book author and illustrator. Wolff published her first book in 1984, and in the decades since, she has illustrated more than 55 titles. Her books have enchanted generations of young (and old) readers with their imaginative worldbuilding.

Wolff's roots in Middlebury run deep. Her father was hired by the college in 1956 as a Professor of Economics when Wolff was just nine months old. She grew up on Chipman Hill among a community of other Middlebury College faculty families.

"It was a great place to grow up," Wolff said. "I could walk to school, to Mary Hogan Elementary and later Middlebury Union High School."

Wolff recalled how her family built a room onto their house dedicated entirely to creating things, which they called "the rat hole." Cabinets lined the walls, a large table filled the center and her mother kept a sewing machine there.

"That was a room you just went in to do stuff," Wolff said, describing how her parents printed their own Christmas cards and illustrated programs for the Middlebury Community Players. "What you grow up with is what you consider normal. And if people being artists all around you is normal, then why not?"

Wolff describes art as being part of her DNA, in a literal sense. Her grandfather, Dr. Paul Wolff, was a renowned German photographer known for his still images during Nazi Germany and for pioneering early color photography. "It's interesting to look back at his work and see we had similar preoccupations as artists," she said.

Wolff went on to study at the Rhode Island School of Design, taking courses in printmaking, painting, life drawing and woodworking. From there, she launched her career as an artist, being freelance ever since.

Much of her storytelling draws from the world she grew up in, one filled with nature, animals and the freedom to imagine. Her children's books often include animals as the main protagonists that young readers can instantly recognize. Some of her notable titles include "When Lucy Goes Out Walking," "Baby Beluga" and "Each Living Thing."

"Being with animals was always a part of my childhood, so I naturally included them in my books," Wolff said. "In picture books, the words don't have to do all the work, words can set the scene, and then the pictures create the universe — they show who the characters are, what the weather is, what time period we're in. There are so many choices to be made."

Wolff also finds inspiration for her stories in her everyday life. One of her books, "How to Help a Pumpkin Grow," began as a simple memory from her daily drives near Lake Dunmore, near where she lives in the town of Leicester.

"There was this lovely little farm along my route with an honor-system produce stand," Wolff said. "The man who ran it made the most beautiful displays and grew the best corn and tomatoes and radishes."

Over time, Wolff befriended the farmer, Wayne, and even brought her son to help pick pumpkins one fall. "I realized how heavy pumpkins are — and how prickly their stems can be when they're fresh," she said. "I stored that memory away."

Years later, that memory inspired the book. Its story follows a farmer, imagined as a dog, and his band of unlikely animal helpers, including a crow, goat, duck and rabbit, as they plant, tend and harvest pumpkins together. The story ends with the animals carving jack-o'-lanterns, bringing the growing season full circle.

Beyond illustrating books, Wolff also takes on commissioned work, painting everything from boats and homes to human portraits. She is a member of the Brandon Artists Guild, a local cooperative gallery that includes more than 30 artists and artisans.

In recent years, Wolff has brought her art into the digital sphere, using social media as both a gallery and a platform for activism. Her recent work often engages directly with politics, blending her signature animal imagery with bold, socially conscious messages. Pieces that still resemble her children's illustrations now have taglines like "Proudly Antifa" and "Don't Stop Resisting," reflecting what she sees as the urgency of the current moment.

"I never needed to become political until the first Trump administration," Wolff said. "For someone who makes a lot of visual things, social media is a good platform… and as the daughter of an immigrant, I can't be quiet about that."

Wolff also urges young people interested in pursuing art as a career to take the step.

"I would still always encourage somebody, if you want to be an artist and you're really passionate about it, and hungry for it, then, by all means, do it and figure out a way to make a living."

VERMONT WAY FOODS SIGNS MILK WITH DIGNITY AGREEMENT AT ACORN EVENT

By ELISABETH DELLIT
Contributing Writer

At the Addison County Relocalization Network (ACORN) Food Hub on Oct. 3, a crowd gathered to celebrate the signing of an agreement between Vermont Way Foods, a local farm, and Migrant Justice's Milk with Dignity. There was cheese tasting, music, Mexican food, and a Vermont staple, Ben & Jerry's, which signed a similar deal with the organization back in 2017.

The agreement marks a step toward ensuring that all migrant dairy farmworkers in Vermont receive fair labor protections. By signing with Migrant Justice (MJ), farms commit to following the Milk with Dignity (MD) Code of Conduct, thus guaranteeing workers paid sick days, breaks, safe working conditions, fair housing, time off, education on legal rights and a process to report abuse without retaliation.

Founded in 2009, MJ works to "build the voice, capacity and power of the immigrant farmworker community to organize for economic justice and human rights," according to its website. Its Milk with Dignity program addresses unjust labor conditions for migrants on Vermont dairy farms.

Participating farms also receive product premiums to offset costs associated with complying with the code. MD's Standards Council monitors implementation and serves as a liaison between workers and farmers. Before the program, there was no process for negotiation.

Among those in attendance were members of Migrant Justice at Midd (MJ@M), a student organization that partners with the nonprofit.

For MJ@M co-leader Sophia Kahn '26, the club embodies the belief that everyone's struggles are connected, regardless of immigration status.

"Anyone can help out with everything — no one is limited to a single role," Kahn said. "You can do art, cook, write, discuss, find community and much more."

A goal for the MD campaign is to have the chain grocery store Hannaford Supermarket sign the agreement and ensure that all local dairy farms supplying the chain are compliant with the MD Code of Conduct, according to MJ's Communications and Development Coordinator Rachel Elliot. If the chain signs, dairy farms that sell their products to Hannaford must in turn comply with the MD Code of Conduct.

Major retailers such as Hannaford often benefit from low dairy prices, which can reflect underpaid, overworked migrant workers. To push for change, MJ plans a statewide "Hannaford Mega-Action Day" on Nov. 15, with coordinated pickets in towns across the state such as Morrisville, Shelburne and Middlebury.

Matt Stevenson '27 attended one of these Hannaford picket lines last year, which motivated them to join MJAM and eventually become a co-leader.

"I think at Middlebury, it's possible to operate sort of in the college bubble and not be in touch with everything that's happening in the country and the state," Stevenson said.

Stevenson described the club as a community in which real power can be built by people centered around achieving social justice.

Remi Beauharnois '27, an MJ@M co-leader, also attended one of these past pickets.

"[Hannaford] has their own private police force that comes out, so that's pretty impactful for me to see direct opposition to the work we're doing," Beauharnois said.

Despite the opposition, she emphasized the positive impact of a supportive community, especially following the recent uptick in the harassment of migrant workers.

Supporters can sign a Hannaford consumer pledge, agreeing to participate in a boycott if Migrant Justice calls for one.

Milk with Dignity Agreement
JUSTICIA MIGRANTE
MIGRANT JUSTICE

COURTESY PHOTO / MIGRANT JUSTICE
A farm representative signing the Milk with Dignity Agreement.

"The consumer pledge campaign directly puts pressure on Hannaford and allows Migrant Justice to demonstrate, with proof, the amount of people who would participate in a boycott at the store, which is a useful bargaining chip," Stevenson said.

Supporters can also submit Hannaford receipts to show the level of consumer support for a potential boycott, according to Elliot.

Another current goal for MJ, along with the MD Hannaford campaign, is to counter the drastic increase in immigration enforcement under the Trump administration. To support these efforts, members have been at the ICE office in St. Albans, accompanying people to appointments.

Additionally, MJ works to to help release people from detention centers, such as the recent case of Emanuel and Guadalupe Diaz, a father and son who were detained in South Burlington in late August, but are being held in a detention facility in Michigan.

Elliot, like Beauharnois, finds inspiration in the local community.

"I always leave the worker assemblees feeling incredibly inspired," Elliot said. "During these meetings, workers from all over the region gather together to talk through shared struggles and build towards collective solutions. You can really see the power of the immigrant community in those spaces."

VERMONT FEMALE FARMERS PHOTO EXHIBIT BROUGHT TO SHELDON MUSEUM

By KATRINA SCHWARZ
Senior Local Editor

In Vermont, about 40% of farms are owned by women — a truth not recognized by many, according to photographer JuanCarlos Gonzalez. Originally from Maunabo, Puerto Rico, Gonzalez spent two years photographing and chronicling the stories of 46 female farmers in Vermont, culminating in a photography collection that is being displayed at the Henry Sheldon Museum in Middlebury until January.

The collection, titled "Vermont Female Farmers," opened at the Sheldon Museum this past Friday, Oct. 3. Curated by interim curator Kelly Hickey, items from the museum's collection are displayed alongside the photographs, working to weave together the past and present of Vermont farming. These items include a set of bonnets from the 19th century and a variety of antique farming tools.

The photographs, both black-and-white and color, span the walls of the museum. Hung next to each picture is the "story in a nutshell" of the woman pictured.

Gonzalez shared in an interview that his grandmother was a farmer in Puerto Rico and was constantly asked the name of the man who ran her farm. While out to dinner at a farm-to-table restaurant in Woodstock, Vermont, the photographer overheard a very similar conversation that transported him back to those childhood memories.

"[We] overheard someone, the neighboring table, asking the staff who is the guy they get their veggies from, who is the guy they get the meat from," Gonzalez said. "It was a flashback of growing up with my grandmother, when people used to assume that it was a guy that ran the farm or assume that it was a guy who ran the business."

He decided that, if he could use his art to amplify the stories of female agriculturalists, he would. Originally, the project was only supposed to include ten farmers, but his work snowballed as each farmer referred him to more women to photograph and interview.

"They are so passionate about what they do, and not only passionate, but they believe in it, which shows when they talk about it. Out of the 46 farmers, not even one of them was negative about [their work]," said Gonzalez.

Ariel Krolick, one of the farmers chronicled in the collection, reflected this passion in an interview with The Campus. She runs Ariel's Honey Infusions, which sustainably harvests raw Vermont honey.

Krolick got involved with the project because she loved the mission of Gonzalez's work in supporting female farmers.

"I connect with people through bees, basically. That's why I have my business, is to educate people. JuanCarlos appreciates that in all of the farmers, so it meant a lot to me to keep supporting him and what he is doing," Krolick said.

The photo collection came to the Henry Sheldon Museum after Coco Moseley, its executive director, sent an email to Gonzalez inviting the collection after seeing the work displayed at the Fleming Museum in Burlington. The artist readily agreed, explaining that Vermont Female Farmers had been shown in northern and southern Vermont museums but had yet to be exhibited fully in the middle of the state.

Hickey explained that the curation of the exhibit was a collaborative effort among museum staff, Middlebury College professor Ellery Foutch, and other community members. She inherited the project from previous curator Emily Bryant, who had already done some research on the items that could be displayed alongside the collection.

COURTESY PHOTOS / JUANCARLOS GONZALEZ

The Vermont Female Farmers collection works to amplify the voices of 46 female farmers from around the state.

"It was great to work in a collaborative format like that, I think there were six of us in total… I would love to work like that all the time," said Hickey.

She shared that some of her personal favorite supplemental pieces from the Henry Sheldon Museum's own collection include the set of bonnets as well as colorful antique fair ribbons that complement the photography. Hickey hopes that the presence of the Vermont Female Farmers photography will show the Middlebury community that historical museums have a place for contemporary art.

"It allows people to have this nice kind of flow, and to allow people to understand the way that time and stories move. These stories collide at some point. We are creating our own history, and stepping off and leaving that behind us — hopefully, some of that will be collected too," she said.

The Vermont Female Farmers collection has also been compiled into a book that was recently incorporated into the Library of Congress's archives and is currently being sold at the Henry Sheldon.

"I feel that with this achievement of having the book in the Library of Congress, if the show were to stop travelling, that's fine. The fact that everyone will be able to go in and read about these farmers, that for the rest of my life these farmers will be on permanent record is surreal," Gonzalez shared.

He thinks that, by educating themselves about what farmers do and the stories behind food, people can learn to better support farmers in their communities. Gonzalez created vermontfemalefarmers.com, a website accompanying his work where people can dive into the stories of the farmers featured in the Vermont Female Farmers collection.

"Go in, learn about them, and support them. They need the support, especially now more than ever," he said.

Students interested in learning more can visit the exhibit, peruse the website, or purchase the Vermont Female Farmers book. They can learn more about Gonzalez's work through his Instagram account @JuanKasFoto or on his website.

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THE AI CONVERSATIONS WE'RE NOT HAVING

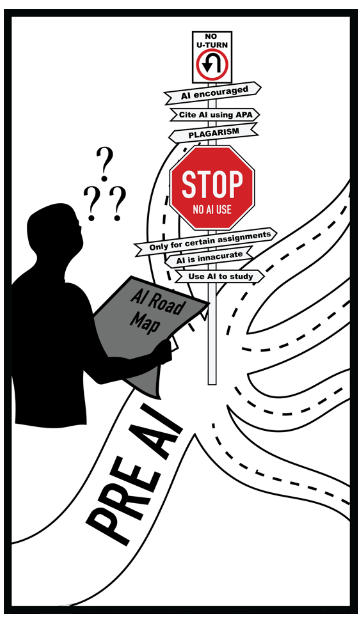
Op-Ed

__Ting Cui__ is a memer of the class of 2025.5 and the Business Director.

As a super senior graduating this coming February, my college experience has spanned two distinct eras: before artificial intelligence (AI) and after AI. My introduction to AI came over Christmas break in 2022, when my tech-obsessed father showed me ChatGPT. My family crowded around my laptop, collectively testing its responses with wide-eyed curiosity. Back then, I felt ahead of the curve, part of a small group witnessing the dawn of something that might change the world. Three years later, as I prepare to graduate, I feel the opposite.

Despite the novelty, I wasn't particularly drawn to using ChatGPT. As a political science major who seeks out writing-intensive opportunities like The Campus, I believed nothing could replace the sensate, lived experience behind human creativity. ChatGPT hallucinated facts, struggled with nuance and at the time, its knowledge cutoff left a lot of information outdated.

What began as cautious curiosity into the technology evolved into what Middlebury Distinguished Endowed Professor Allison Stanger aptly called a "theater of prohibition" at this fall's Clifford Symposium. While I stuck with the "old-fashioned" way of doing assignments, some of my peers at Middlebury — and even more at other schools — were experimenting, learning how to collaborate with AI and slowly building fluency. I didn't stumble across platforms with specialized functions until 2025. As graduation looms, I feel like someone blinking, only to realize the world has changed in that instant.



COURTESY OF WILL MORTELL

There's an unspoken expectation that young people should intuitively understand these technologies the same way we're expected to explain TikTok to our parents or teach older professors about the latest digital tools. Yet despite being part of the generation that supposedly 'gets' technology, I don't feel equipped to navigate AI's complexities.

In my almost four years at Middlebury, only two of my courses have integrated AI into the coursework. One introduced the various tools directly, the other had us compare our writing to that of AI's, leaving me feeling like my voice and authorship had been stripped away. It's a stark contrast to my brother's experience at the University of Pennsylvania, where AI is embraced openly. He tells me that it's not about memorizing information anymore, but knowing where to look and what questions to ask. I asked him a financial question recently, and he told me: "Just ask Chat, it knows more than me."

His default is the machine. Mine is still people, but I sometimes wonder if I'm the strange one because of that.

The reality is that AI is already reshaping not just how we work, but how we learn. We are now the first generation to be taught by humans and machines, replete with the anxieties it brings. Why ask a professor during office hours when ChatGPT is available 24/7? Why go to peer tutoring if an algorithm can walk you through the same material faster, without judgment, and with infinite patience? These tools make finding help accessible, but at the cost of human-to-human interaction, mentorship, and the messy but essential process of learning together.

Middlebury's campus has been cautious. We tell ourselves that by keeping AI at bay, we are protecting our pure liberal arts ideals. But the truth is less romantic. Professors craft strict policies that they don't fully believe in. Students conceal the extent of their use. Faculty quietly experiment with AI in their own research while discouraging us from doing the same. Everyone pretends this dance of deception isn't happening, even as it erodes our Honor Code.

This silence comes at a cost. Prohibition doesn't work — it only drives AI use underground. Instead, we need open, honest dialogue between faculty and students about what ethical AI use looks like in a liberal arts setting. What kind of work do we want to produce? What kind of thinkers do we want students to become? And how do we prepare for a professional world where AI use is not only accepted but expected?

There are clear boundaries, like asking AI to do your homework or write essays. The harder questions are in the gray areas. Is Grammarly AI? What about Speechify reading 300 pages of theory out loud, or NotebookLM turning PDFs into podcasts? Is asking ChatGPT to explain Russian grammar cases so different from having a personal tutor? Where is the line between support and substitution, augmentation versus automation? These gray areas matter for determining our own responsible use.

Students need help navigating these boundaries. Right now, we're navigating alone. Speaking to a professor can feel risky, like a confessional moment where you'll be caught. But I don't think Middlebury students want to use AI as a shortcut. We chose this school to learn, to think, to create. The real question is how to integrate AI without losing those qualities.

Not addressing AI also leaves students unprepared for the post-grad reality where its use is expected, if not encouraged, in workplaces. It's about preparation for a world outside of academia that embraces AI for productivity, as companies are increasingly asking their workers to do more. As Parker Harris '89 said at the Clifford Symposium, "The paralegal that knows how to leverage AI will do a higher value service for a legal firm than probably what they're doing today, or what AI could do alone — same with a financial analyst."

The conversation should go beyond academic integrity. When some students can afford premium AI tools while others cannot, it becomes about equity. It's also about literacy, the way financial literacy once became a core competency. And it's about culture. Larger society still prizes output, productivity and résumé lines over uncertainty, contemplation and the painstaking process of thinking deeply. AI accelerates that culture. But it could also challenge it if we learn to use it with intention.

Personally, AI has now become both a temptation and tool. It can help me code for research, brush up on math problems I've long forgotten, brainstorm, generate visuals and organize club agendas. But it also tempts me to sacrifice depth for efficiency and trade a tedious process for a polished output that isn't mine. My messy Google doc full of arranged and rearranged paragraphs, scattered sentences and suggestions to myself may be slower, but it makes me think harder and grants the reward of arriving at a final product that is all me.

Middlebury cannot ignore these tensions. Students want to learn, to think, to create. We don't need AI to replace that. We need guidance, conversation and space to figure out how to integrate new tools without losing our humanity. Clearer boundaries and more faculty-student dialogue without "gotcha" moments could be a start.

It's not about learning technical use, but rather ethical use. Middlebury should prepare us to engage with AI thoughtfully and coexist with it in ways that make us higher-functioning humans, not less. Our honor code depends on it. Our preparation for the future demands it. And our commitment to learning — the very reason we're here — requires it. Let's start having those conversations.

THE VALUE OF PHYSICAL MEDIA: ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND ART

Op-Ed

__Anthony Cinquina__ is a member of the class of 2025.5 and an arts and culture editor.

Over the last few years, I've been slowly indoctrinated into the cult of physical media. There is no shortage of YouTube video essays made by 20-somethings living in Brooklyn that rave about the cultural, philosophical, aesthetic and moral value of dvds, records and film photography. And it's hard not to agree with them. Get your first turntable and a few hand-me-down records from your dad and all of a sudden you're smoking cigarettes, wearing denim and writing articles like this.

I would like to take the video essayists argument a bit further, though, and discuss how physical media is also important as a cultural, artistic and deeply human response to the threat that artificial intelligence (AI) poses to creativity and art.

In August, I let my housemates know that I'd be bringing a stereo system for our living room: a turntable, CD player, receiver, amplifier and speakers. I encouraged them to bring any compatible music they owned.

Now our walls are covered in records. Many more records and CDs remain in crates on the floor, each a reflection of their owner's tastes. And as a consequence of their use, rotating in and out of the turntable, on and off the wall, they have become jumbled up and mixed around. The needle skips when people walk heavily on the floor; older records crackle and pop; sleeves get dusty and require some care. This kind of macro-entropy, unique to physical media, is important. Unlike the pristine Spotify playlist, this music is messy and human, it wears time and it shows off its use.

But let's not get ahead of ourselves; we are far from a real meaningful movement away from digital media. I must admit, I still listen to Spotify through my headphones while walking around campus. Clearly the boombox has yet to make its return. It's true that the physical media industry overall is in recession, especially compared to the global behemoth that is streaming. Still, trends over the past decade or so have been clear: young people are starting to embrace physical media again, largely in response to the dominance of streaming industries.

STATIONTOSTATION DAVIDBOWIE
WHITE LIGHT/WHITE HEAT THE VELVET UNDERGROUND
RAMONES
ROCKET TO RUSSIA
FLOATING POINTS PHAROAH SANDERS & THE LONDON SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA
Patti Smith Horses
LEONARD COHEN
VARIOUS POSITIONS
van morrison moondance
BILLY JOEL THE STRANGER
VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

ANTHONY CINQUINA / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

At the same time that young people around the world have been spinning records, developing film and gaming on grainy Cathode Ray Tube TVs, musician Xania Monet hit the billboard and signed a multi-million dollar record deal. This would not be an interesting occurrence if not for the fact that Xania Monet doesn't exist. Monet is not a person and much less a musician; it is a bodiless and brainless product of AI. In a similar vein, the derivatively named band "The Velvet Sundown" recently revealed to their 1 million monthly Spotify listeners that they too are a product of AI. Their name, transparently appropriated from the 60s art-rock band "The Velvet Underground," is perhaps a perfect indicator of the kinds of artistic strides being made by AI. That is to say: none.

But beyond originality, the capacity of artificial intelligence to produce at, or beyond the level that humans are capable of, is not completely new, and the value of such an ability is far more nuanced than many would have you believe.

Netflix's new series "El Eternauta" has been in the news this year for being the first show on the streaming service to use AI. In this case, generative AI was used to speed up and lower the cost of VFX creation and processing, an industry that has already long been dominated by computation and has left practical effects far behind. Is it a good thing that the financial bar for entry into film and video production is lower? Can AI be of genuine help to smaller creators who are also willing to maintain artistic integrity? The answers to these questions aren't clear. AI might have a synergistic role to play.

What is scary to me is not simply the ability of AI to match or far exceed a person's capacity for production. What is concerning is the willingness of many people to absorb AI so deeply into the heart of the creative process. What is concerning is the eagerness of corporations to capitalize on a cheap, infinitely productive and hollow "artist" and invest in it millions of dollars, with total disregard for the artistic process and a lack of respect for their audience. Businesses are not new to "consumerizing" art, but this kind of transgression is one that so fundamentally offends the bond between human experience and human expression that it presents a new kind of problem.

AI in art is a cultural concern as well as it is a technological one, and our culture's rediscovered love for physical media might be an unconscious response to this threat. The messiness of my stereo setup is real; the scratches on the records are human and carry in them decades of listening and love. AI might be good and getting better at producing, but it lags behind when it comes to creating. Keep an AI song as a digital file and it could remain indistinguishably human; prompt Chat GPT to create music that is real, music that you can touch and hold, music with a story and history, music that warps in heat, and it will fail miserably.

Physical media might be able to work as the perfect membrane, letting into our culture the uses of AI that synergize with human artists while keeping out the threat of total takeover. This is about keeping art human and for humans. It's about keeping art and the process of creation and consumption sacred and in harmony with the human experience, as it has always been.

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The Middlebury Campus

THE DRIVE HOME: ON KNOWING WHEN YOU'VE FOUND YOUR INTELLECTUAL CENTER

Op-Ed

***Jennifer Strtak** is a visiting assistant professor of history.*

If the professoriate is your true calling, reality dictates that you go where the openings are, rather than where you wish to be. My experience of the job market was a continental compass tour: As a graduate student, the process landed me at campus visits in Virginia and Texas, and later, as a postdoctoral fellow, in Utah and Vermont. I was quite happy in my postdoctoral position, researching and teaching in New Jersey, and I did not have to leave. I, however, had the rare opportunity to go somewhere I wanted to be. When the offer came from Middlebury College, I did not hesitate.

I am a product of large research institutions. My studies took me from the University of Toronto, where I was an undergraduate student, to the University of Cambridge and Yale University, where I completed my graduate studies, and finally to Princeton University, where I was a postdoctoral researcher and lecturer. Over thirteen years, I learned the historian's craft and became a specialist on early modern Europe. In the process, I discovered the deep satisfaction of carving out a tiny corner of the past and making it intimately my own.

I will always find profound satisfaction in the archives — in uncovering how technological artifacts shaped everyday life in early modern cities, and in advancing research into material and spatial histories. Take, for instance, the carriage. To most people, these passenger vehicles — popularized in mid-seventeenth-century Europe — are relics of conspicuous consumption. When I discussed the carriage with students in the past, it was clear they believed early vehicular technology (not all technology is digital, if you can imagine!) had no bearing on their lives. It is precisely this initial skepticism, I would tell them, that illuminates the purpose of humanistic inquiry: to read the world — past and present — not just for contradictions and silences, but for the meanings these gaps reveal.

Why do we configure roads between two sidewalks? Why do we place so much emphasis on the impact of automobiles in reconfiguring urban life? A key logic of city space that we use every day is, in part, a result of the introduction of the carriage. Seventeenth-century driving parks like Paris's Cours-la-Reine (Queen's Promenade) gave rise to a tripartite division of space — a center lane for wheeled traffic flanked by space for foot traffic. This spatial logic was transplanted to the city's boulevards beginning in the 1670s and can be found in built environments around the world to this day. The way we navigate and read cities is, therefore, shaped by early modern moments — when people were learning, both physically and socially, how to accept and integrate new modes of urban movement into the everyday.

A result of discussions like this has meant that over time, the classroom has exerted a strong gravity on me. Reinforcing the full, elegant architecture of humanistic studies has thus become a force equally as compelling as the research itself. This is why I chose to become a part of a liberal arts college. In the brief span of four weeks, I have come to delight in the classroom as the crucible of intellectual vitality and self-cultivation — an arena where students and professors engage together in the shared pleasure of contemplation. Teaching, whether a lecture or a seminar, does not feel like stepping away from my research; it feels like returning to its very source.

In every encounter, I challenge my students to stretch the bounds of their creativity and to think with fresh, unaccustomed rigor. They return the favor with questions that surprise me, unsettle me and sometimes undo what I thought I had already settled. They have brought forward historical actors, events and objects I had shelved in the back rooms of my mind — overlooked, perhaps, while I was consumed with other lines of inquiry. Now, once-forgotten fragments are resurfacing, staging a quiet rebellion. Charged with new meaning, they compel me to rethink what I thought I knew and confront the assumptions woven into my own discoveries.

Middlebury has confirmed that I am exactly where I belong. My intellectual anchor need not be the grand machinery of the research university; it can rest instead in the enduring, quiet tradition of the liberal arts. The intimacy of our classrooms is, in its way, a sacred space — a site where conversation stretches across time, and historical actors are welcomed not merely as subjects of study, but as interlocutors. Together, we explore a world at once deeply foreign and strangely resonant, and, in the process, witness how meaning is made. We learn to interpret the past with the awareness that our work requires both intellectual precision and a responsibility to resist utility in its narrowest sense. We do not gather here to train for a specific job. Rather, we have the privilege of committing to the study of history to cultivate judgment, deepen our sensitivity toward one another and engage with the human condition across time and place.

There is laughter in our classrooms. There is confusion, and there are silences — moments when no one quite knows what to say. But there is also energy, courage and curiosity. This is why I came to Middlebury. Not because it was the logical step, but because it offered the conditions and possibilities under which deep thinking, meaningful teaching and intellectual risk-taking are not only possible — but embraced.

In 1486, the Italian scholar Pico della Mirandola composed his famous Oration on the Dignity of Man. "Thou, constrained by no limits, in accordance with thine own free will, in whose hand We have placed thee, shalt ordain for thyself the limits of thy nature," he explained. At stake in Pico's text was a powerful, emerging thought: that the ability to change oneself and one's world is anchored in free will. Pico's text was limited to the sociocultural milieu to which he himself belonged: the noble elite. His work is a product of Renaissance Humanism — an intellectual and male-dominated movement. However, the profound truth of his argument has lived on beyond those limitations. To preside over that text — as a woman, before a class comprising whole worlds Pico never knew — is to treat the discourse not as a static artifact of Renaissance thought, but as a living, breathing blueprint for the deep, individual work of self-creation now available to all.

Our classroom, in this light, becomes the definitive measure of the text's resilience: a testament to the idea that free will belongs not to the humanist elite, but to all, and our discourse is so very powerful. The liberal arts classroom, in its embrace of open-ended inquiry and self-directed study, becomes the space where students, constrained by no fixed destiny, are challenged to ordain for themselves the limits of their own nature.

In a world obsessed with automation and optimization, it may seem fanciful — even inefficient — to build a life around small discussions of ideas that are hundreds of years old. But I have never found anything more exhilarating. The drive is over, and I have arrived.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR: WHAT THE MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE REPUBLICANS GOT WRONG ABOUT FREE SPEECH

Op-Ed

***Rick Walker** is a member of the class of 2027.5.*

Joseph Jacobson's recent Letter to the Editor, published in the Oct. 2 issue of The Campus and written on behalf of the Middlebury College Republicans, claims to defend free speech. Responding to an editorial that urged dialogue and safety in campus discourse, the letter accused the Editorial Board of "paradoxically tak[ing] a position leaning in favor of censorship and intolerance rather than any legitimate form of free speech."

"College is not a safe space," it declared. "Real safety is freedom from physical harm, not from disagreeable ideas." It is an argument that first sounds principled, the brave defender of the unalienable rights given to us by the Founding Fathers. The letter treats free speech as an act of defiance, a way to assert one's thoughts without fear. But what it misses is that speech has never been merely an act of assertion. It is also an act of relationship, a way of inhabiting community.

The letter's version of freedom imagines the individual alone at a podium, untouched by the presence or pain of others. But that is not what a campus, or a democracy, actually is. We live, study and argue in proximity. What we say lands somewhere. To treat speech as something detached from the reality of space and time is to misunderstand the very conditions that make it possible.

I will be clear: I do not believe Middlebury should ban controversial speakers. Disagreement is not dangerous. Exposure to ideas we find uncomfortable or even offensive can be essential to understanding why we believe what we do. I share part of Joseph Jacobson's concern that shielding students from that entirely is unjust, but what his letter misses is that the presence of a controversial speaker is not the same thing as dialogue. It is not enough to simply open the door and call it free speech.

Free speech on college campuses does not mean removing all structure, but rather designing the structure well. It means making sure people who feel threatened or unseen by a speaker's message still have space to respond, to question, to challenge. And that is where I part ways with Jacobson. His version of freedom is defined by endurance, who can withstand the discomfort of being offended. Mine is defined by relationships, how we create conditions where people can face difficult ideas without being erased by them. The question at hand should not be "Should someone be allowed to speak?" but "What are we doing to make sure the event actually teaches something?"

Jacobson's letter leans heavily on courage, the idea that confronting uncomfortable ideas is the essence of college. But real courage is not the absence of safety. It is what grows out of safety. Students take intellectual risks when they feel they belong. They ask harder questions when they are not bracing for ridicule or erasure.

The letter's claim that "college is not a safe space" is audacious. It treats vulnerability as weakness because vulnerability would require reflection, and reflection is what ideological certainty fears most. When a campus invites someone whose views are harmful or extreme, the real test is not whether students can sit quietly and tolerate it. The test is whether we can design spaces where everyone, even those who feel targeted or disagree, can still take part in the conversation that follows. That is what it means to steward free speech — when vulnerability is celebrated.

Jacobson also writes that the forum format already allows for engagement. He notes that some students, including members of his club, met with the speakers before and after the event, and some even had dinner with them. He presents this as proof that dialogue on campus is alive and well. But those dinners were by invitation. Not every student, certainly not every student who felt directly implicated by the speakers' message, was welcome at that table. Personally, I did not receive the fancy email invitation. What Jacobson describes as "discussion" was not a public conversation but a curated one. Access to dialogue should not depend on proximity to power or belonging to the right network. The fact that a few students could meet privately with speakers does not prove that dialogue is thriving. It proves how easily it can be fenced off.

A moderated panel or a private dinner can look like engagement, but if participation is limited to a select few, the rest of the campus is left to watch. And that is the distinction I believe the Editorial Board was trying to make, between the appearance of open discourse and the practice of it.

The deeper misunderstanding in Jacobson's letter is the idea that freedom and care are opposites, that one must shrink for the other to expand. In reality, they sustain each other. The task is to hold both: defending speech while demanding empathy. Challenging each other without assuming dominance. Building spaces where disagreement is not feared but also is not used as a weapon.

That is what I believe the Editorial Board meant by "start listening." That is what a genuine culture of free speech requires. Not louder voices, but deeper ones. Because in the end, listening is the hardest part of free speech, and maybe the most radical.

IS OPENAI AT OUR (MIDD)CORE?

Editorial

The editorial represents the opinion of the Middlebury Campus Editorial Board.

The Middlebury Campus

Susanna Schatz

Last week, MiddCORE announced its partnership with OpenAI for its J-Term program. The announcement raises questions about whether OpenAI and its generative artificial intelligence (AI) tool, ChatGPT, being invited in this way to our campus reflects an endorsement of such a controversial company and of the software itself. OpenAI has been subject to numerous copyright lawsuits, continues to cause severe environmental damage and its tools are banned in several classrooms here.

We have concerns about the values the partnership implies and we call on MiddCORE to use the upcoming program to examine the company's ethical ambiguities.

We know that MiddCORE aims to challenge its students through its partnerships by providing workshops focused on leadership and innovation. OpenAI is certainly at the forefront of AI innovation, and by coming to our campus, it solidifies Middlebury's status as an institution capable of facing the challenges of our time. MiddCORE students will be forced to face tough questions regarding the legal and ethical problems it now faces.

It is unclear how the mission of OpenAI relates to our institution, which is known for its honor code, environmental science programs, critical thinking, research and the humanities. We wonder if this choice was made with prestige in mind over a consideration of its broader implications for our reputation and mission.

Past partnerships with MiddCORE reflect Middlebury's values. Patagonia, for example, is known for its commitment to sustainability. Athletic Brewing Co. flaunts a mission to create inclusive and good-tasting beverages for those who choose not to drink alcohol or are in recovery from alcohol abuse. Even LEGO has a broad commitment to family-centered creativity and learning.

ChatGPT uses large, energy-consuming data centers that cause irreversible damage to the communities they surround. MiddCORE's J-Term workshop must invite students to explore OpenAI's environmental practices and address how OpenAI may mitigate its environmental impact.

The program must also oblige students to explore tough questions facing OpenAI's business model, including whether it should charge for its tools while the producers of the academic and journalistic materials it feeds on go uncompensated. Middlebury values academic honesty, so we should not allow a company that exploits the work of others to go unquestioned.

Honest conversations about AI are taking place across our campus, and this fall's Clifford Symposium solidified this commitment. As we found in our Zeitgeist 7.0 survey, the honor code is regularly broken on our campus and the widespread use of AI is changing our college experience.

Whether or not we believe AI has a place in the classroom, it is clear that it is establishing itself in our lives. While we do not necessarily condemn its incorporation into classrooms, nor deny the role learning how to use it may play in our lives soon in the future, we maintain that OpenAI as a company presents numerous ethical ambiguities, specifically regarding intellectual property. As a publication ourselves, we can not ignore the importance of the value of attributing published material to its owners and acknowledging that tools like ChatGPT only exist because of the materials, written by journalists, it feeds on.

It may not be the responsibility of MiddCORE, a program that provides rare, professionally minded programs to Middlebury students, to litigate the institution of Middlebury's views on OpenAI and ChatGPT as a whole, but it is hard to imagine the decision to partner with OpenAI came without some thought about how ChatGPT and tools like it our being used on our campus.

The long-term effect this partnership will have on our campus remains to be seen, but we know that a company as relevant, widely celebrated and criticized as OpenAI will ignite many serious discussions to our campus about whether this is a tool of the future or a calamity for the liberal arts education. We hope Middlebury students use this partnership as an opportunity to think about why they chose to attend a liberal arts college and whether AI has a place in academia. If you have a strong opinion about this partnership, we encourage you to submit to our publication in the form of op-eds or a letter to the editor.

REEL CRITIC: “ONE BATTLE AFTER ANOTHER” IS A REDISCOVERY OF SUBJECT

By NICK PENNIMAN
Contributing Writer

In retrospect, it makes peculiar sense that, of all contemporary American directors, Paul Thomas Anderson would prove best-equipped to make the decade’s first great “Movie About Our Times.” The cokey, affecting mania of his early films (“Magnolia,” “Boogie Nights”); the strange, libidinal inexplicability of his later ones (“Phantom Thread,” “The Master”); and the unabashed, operatic clamor of his big one (“There Will Be Blood”) are united in his latest project, “One Battle After Another,” which meets the manic, inexplicable, clamorous American moment without indulging in its stupidity or endorsing its fatalism. Anderson has never set a movie in the present, but, in a way, it’s as if he’s been preparing to all along.

One hallmark of any Anderson movie is a certain tonal fission, a tipping of the narrative dominoes that leads the audience from an initial, straightforward emotion to a compounded one somehow more lucid for its electric confusion. Anderson can make the move within a single scene (see: Phillip Seymour Hoffman’s character breaking down after trying to impress Mark Wahlberg’s with his new car in “Boogie Nights”), or it can feel as if he’s making it over the course of an entire movie (see: “Magnolia”). The impulse to open not just one, but several, tonal floodgates, and then to ride the current for longer than expected, is what most animates his films — even “One Battle After Another,” his first real popcorn thriller. To laugh when you probably shouldn’t (or vice versa), to not know whether what you are watching is deadly serious or absurdly unserious (or both) — what could be a more fitting effect for a movie about today’s political climate?

Without such a restlessly imaginative, typically atonal score from Radiohead guitarist Johnny Greenwood — who has worked on Anderson’s last six films — it would be hard to make the tonal bedlam of “One Battle After Another” work. The music is the stitching that holds the film together, enabling the rage of one scene to fuse with the delicacy of another, the desperation of one with the melancholy of another. In hindsight, the incredible scene in “Magnolia,” in which the film’s main characters break from reality to sing Aimee Mann’s “Wise Up,” looks like a breakthrough in Anderson’s understanding of how music could serve his directorial ethos: eight characters in different places and different situations, but all somehow connected to one another, tuned in to the same psychic FM station on which Mann is being played. What Anderson did with the scene was new, but the headier idea it expresses — that personal experience is not relegated to the singular self, that what happens to anyone is also happening to you — is as old as art.

The exact politics of “One Battle After Another” has been a source of some confusion. It seems unclear to a number of critics — conservative and left-leaning alike — that the movie is not a total endorsement of the kind of radicalism practiced by some of its main characters. (Leonardo DiCaprio’s and Teyana Taylor’s characters are members of the group “The French 75”.) The National Review’s film critic Armond White, for example, writes that Anderson “romanticize[s] Sixties political violence” in a “cowardly artistic choice.” He likes the part where DiCaprio’s character settles into the couch with a joint, mouthing a credo he no longer has the energy to live out: “The most politically astute scene shows a pothead radical getting stoned while watching ‘The Battle of Algiers.’” But isn’t that the point? What Anderson is being astute about is the fact that many former radicals had fun being dangerous in their twenties and then retreated into selfish cynicism in middle age.

In fact, DiCaprio’s character — who White reads as “woke-before-woke” — endangers the entire project of another character, played by Benicio Del Toro, who is actively protecting dozens of lives in what he calls a “Latino Harriet Tubman situation.” Del Toro’s resistance to the state is of the unshowy variety; DiCaprio’s was always more about the explosions.

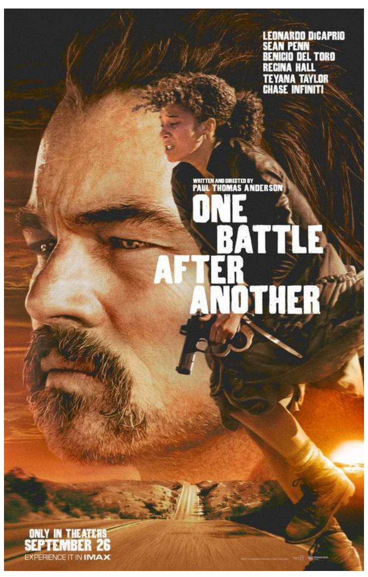
Might part of Anderson’s commentary, then, be about how woke actors sometimes hamper one progressive cause or another, getting in the way of people who know what they’re doing but are less interested in the posturing? More partisan-minded critics have tried to either indict or champion the archetype represented by the movie’s revolutionaries. But the movie doesn’t do only one.

Who Anderson does indict (those intrigued by fascism and ethno-nationalism) and champion (a Gen Z character, played by Chase Infiniti, mired in the mess her elders have made of her life and country) is clear. At one point in the movie, Infiniti screams, while holding a gun to her own father, “who are you?” It feels, by then, that Anderson has made one of the most sympathetic movies to Gen Z’s existential predicament yet.

One can argue the specifics of the movie’s politics and, so long as you don’t find it “openly seditious,” like White, still respect Anderson’s will to make a movie that is political at all. Recently, that will has been lacking, not just among American filmmakers, but among writers and musicians, too. The problem is not distinct to our time. As Phillip Roth wrote in a 1961 essay for Commentary titled “Writing American Fiction,” “the American writer in the middle of the 20th century has his hands full in trying to understand, and then describe, and then make credible much of the American reality. It stupefies, it sickens, it infuriates, and finally it is even a kind of embarrassment to one’s own meager imagination. The actuality is continually outdoing our talents.”

Countless articles have articulated similar concerns since the beginning of the Trump years (“Is Satire Dead?”, etc.), and certainly the absurdity of our decade outdoes that of the sixties on multiple fronts. So Roth’s concerns for his own time feel doubly dire when applied to the context of our own: “Much has been made, much of it by the writers themselves, of the fact that the American writer has no status and no respect and no audience: the news I wish to bear is of a loss more central to the task itself, a loss of subject … a voluntary withdrawal of interest by the writer of fiction from some of the grander social and political phenomena of our times.”

This, it seems, is the central question for American artists working today: Will they back away from the moment, or step towards it? In a film industry still dominated by Marvel-like franchises — whose culture consists largely of, as Marc Maron put it, “grown male nerd children” — it is reassuring to see a great director do the latter: find the subject his medium has been losing.



COURTESY PHOTO

The poster of Paul Thomas Anderson’s new film “One Battle After Another.”

A METAMORPHOSIS: STORYTELLING EVENT SEES SPEAKERS EMERGE FROM THEIR “COCOON”

By LILY JENSEN
Staff Writer

A collage of the Middlebury community explored the escapable fact of life: mortality. At this year’s Cocoon, which debuted on Oct. 3, this year’s theme, “Before I die…”, invited speakers and audience members to reflect on life’s impermanence and the beauty that comes from embracing it.

This year’s theme was inspired by the eponymous art installation curated by Camiel Schroeder ’26.5 and Susan Dong ’25.5 in the Mahaney Arts Center (MAC) lobby. Adapted from the global installation by artist Cathy Chang, the piece invites community members to write their own responses to the prompt in chalk, creating a public dialogue around death and desire.

This year, the six speakers interpreted the prompt to varying degrees.

The evening started at an archaeological site in Northern Guatemala, with Professor of Anthropology James Fitzsimmons and his tale of unlikely team dynamics and more than 30 bee stings, all while conducting field work.

This was followed by Hafez Sami-Sagdehi ’28.5, who spoke about discovering a documentary on the El Camino in the midst of finding his own path as a child, and his aspiration to one day, before death, walk El Camino alongside his mother.

Associate Professor of Biology Susan DeSimone then spoke about her relationship to sailing, and navigating through deadly, tumultuous waters on one of her first sailing trips to Burlington.

After intermission, director of the Middlebury School of Abenaki, Jesse Bowman Bruchac, provided cultural context for a tale told countless times through generations of Abenaki people, the indigenous community native to this region of the country, keeping their language and culture alive.

“It’s a story about changing conflict into kinship, which I think we all need to be able to do better in this world,” Bowman Bruchac said. “We learned in the story of how we could possibly deescalate a situation that could have turned out terribly and actually worked out for the villains… even they may need redemption…it’s a powerful lesson and an ancient story.”

Following this story, Associate Professor of Black Studies Jerry Philogene spoke about her love for painting and how that led her to dedicating her life to art history. Philogene shifted the focus of the storytelling experience to the audience through passing out slips of paper with the prompt “Before I die…” whose answers were read out by the student producers.

Dr. Christine Gentry took the stage for the grand finale. She has been featured on “This American Life”, has won three MOTH Grand Story Slams and is the director of the Yale Teaching Fellowship. Gentry told a moving story about donating a kidney to a stranger, an act which set off a chain of transplants that saved multiple lives.

“There is an electric current and the idea that the audience is being transported with you,” Gentry said. “It feels like they’re holding you in your hand… we roam the earth looking for a narrative. It is how we make sense of the world.”

For many attendees, the event underscored storytelling’s importance in building empathy and community.

“I think sharing stories and connecting with others is so impactful and the most powerful form of communication,” audience member Mack Briglin ’26.5 said.

“It’s really lovely to hear from these professors and community members and people of different ages have very different perspectives on how to tell a story,” audience member and University of Vermont student Charlotte Reminais said.

Bruchac emphasized the unique, living quality of storytelling. “I learned to tell stories from my father and other indigenous storytellers,” he said. “I don’t memorize words, I just point out the things along the way to get from the beginning of the journey to the end, and I’m inspired by the audience and the reactions.”

“After Cocoon, everyone kind of comes together and there is a butterfly effect,” Lea said. “Everyone wants to tell everyone else a story now. When you come down here into the reception hall, everyone is exchanging stories.”

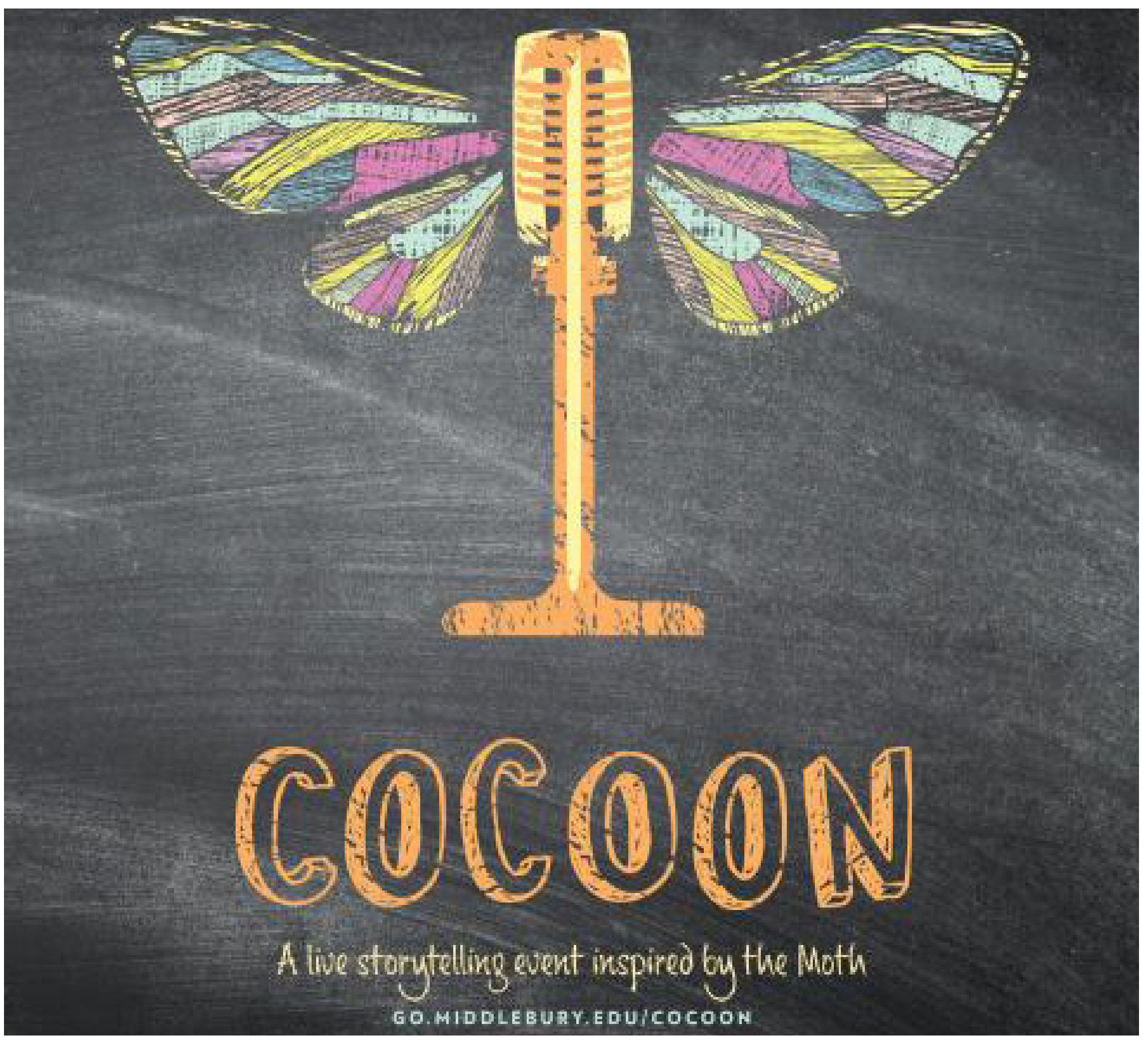
Cocoon began in 2012, when Luke Greenway ’14.5, inspired by the Moth Radio Hour, decided to bring live storytelling to the college community through the Middlebury Moth Up! program. Since then, MAC director Liza Sacheli has worked with students to grow the event into one of the college’s signature literary art showcases.

“We have six storytellers each year telling true stories, live without notes,” Sacheli said. “We usually try to have a nice balance between students and faculty members and staff members and community members, so there’s a really nice broad mix of people telling stories,” Sacheli explained.

This year’s student producers, Karina Lea ’27 and Mary Bosco ’28.5 , collaborated closely with each storyteller to strengthen their narrative structures and delivery technique.

“You don’t want to tell someone how to tell their story, so you don’t, [you] sit down with them and say, ‘I think you should do this, that and that,’” Lea said. “Like, what more do you want people to know, what kind of scene are you trying to paint… the balancing act is the hardest part of producing the stories.”

The full recording of this year’s Cocoon is now available for free with captions on the Robison Hall Youtube Channel, in an effort by the MAC to allow these stories to reach as wide an audience as possible. For those eager to tell a story, Middlebury Moth Up! runs monthly story slams in the Gamut Room, the next scheduled for Oct. 30. Students interested in performing or attending can contact Lea or Bosco for more details.


COCOON
A live storytelling event inspired by the Moth
GO.MIDDLEBURY.EDU/COCOON

COURTESY PHOTO/MIDDLEBURY COCOON

The poster of this year’s Coocon storytelling event.

"THE TRUTH REMIXED" STIRS UP LAUGHTER AND REFLECTION FOR ITS 30TH ANNIVERSARY

By ELIZABETH SCHIERMAN
Contributing Writer

Hepburn Hall buzzed with students, faculty and locals who crowded the stairways leading up to the Hepburn Zoo on opening night of "The Truth Remixed," the 30th annual First Year show. The multi-genre comedy show, directed by Visiting Professor Ashley Nicole Baptiste, ran from Oct. 2-4.

The production combined one act comedies and original poems with its title drawing inspiration from last year's "Echoes of Truth," also directed by Baptiste. While last year's show leaned towards heavy themes of love, grief and reconciliation, "The Truth Remixed" reimagined those ideas through a comedic lens.

"I feel overwhelmed by the madness and bad things happening in the world today," Baptiste said. "I want to give people a moment of reprieve, a chance to sit back and laugh."

The ensemble consisted of 12 actors: eight first years, two sophomores and two juniors. For some, the performance marked their first at the college, and for others, their first time acting on stage. Impressively put together in the span of three weeks, the show's preparation proved to be fast-paced, intense and chaotic, a process Baptiste said she loves.

This intention to bring joy and laughter to the audience was reflected in the stage setup. The minimalist set featured a few chairs, couches, boxes and a door frame that transformed into a lively therapist's office, pizza shop and president's office. Funky pop music played as audience members took their seats, and Baptiste encouraged the crowd to react loudly to whatever they saw on stage, promising an interactive experience.

> "I feel overwhelmed by the madness and bad things happening in the world today," Baptiste said. "I want to give people a moment of reprieve, a chance to sit back and laugh."

The show opened up with all 12 actors moving rhythmically in sync across the stage. At a clap, they froze, chanting together, "I am, I want, I feel, I dream," each adding their own words, describing themselves. The moment invited the audience to consider their own answers.

The first act, titled "Your Mother's Butt," featured a very Freudian setup. A patient, played by Cole Silpe '29, was stretched out on a couch in a counseling session led by psychologist Yan Zhang, '27. The patient is indecisive and clothing-obsessed. He goes from contemplating the perfect pair of shoes to describing a weird dream of his mother wearing a hideous belt and bending over with her butt in his face. The psychologist then asks the patient to hold a conversation with his mother's butt, which prompted the audience to break out into laughter.

In this abnormal therapy session, the bizarre dialogue reveals the patient's inability to take responsibility for anything, which results in his misery. In the end, the patient refuses to admit his faults and resorts to buying another expensive pair of shoes, compelled by his materialistic desires. It felt like a mild criticism not only of the patient and his flawed character, but of therapy itself.

Subsequent scenes varied greatly in terms of plot and character. The audiences were bombarded by extraordinary scenes: an awkward pizza store love story, the crisis of the U.S. president's PR managers when he describes his wife's morning as "cunty," a bizarre office love affair, a guy dumping his girlfriend by sending her a singing telegram and two sisters humorously assessing what it takes to get sent to hell based on their, very literal, interpretations of the Bible.

The last act was equally hilarious, spoofing on the trope of a straight American high school couple Kris, played by Olt Kastrati '29, and Jeff, played by Atticus Hodges '29. We follow their date to an "edgy" lunch spot, where they find the customers intolerable and pitiful. Their conversation is bland, shallow, not about anything in particular, and yet extremely funny.

The performance closed where it began, with the cast chanting "I am, I want, I feel, I dream," reinforcing their discourse with additional phrases like "I hope" and "I see". This ritual chanting after the scenes seemed to be a final act of reflection, with the actors asking themselves "Who are we?"

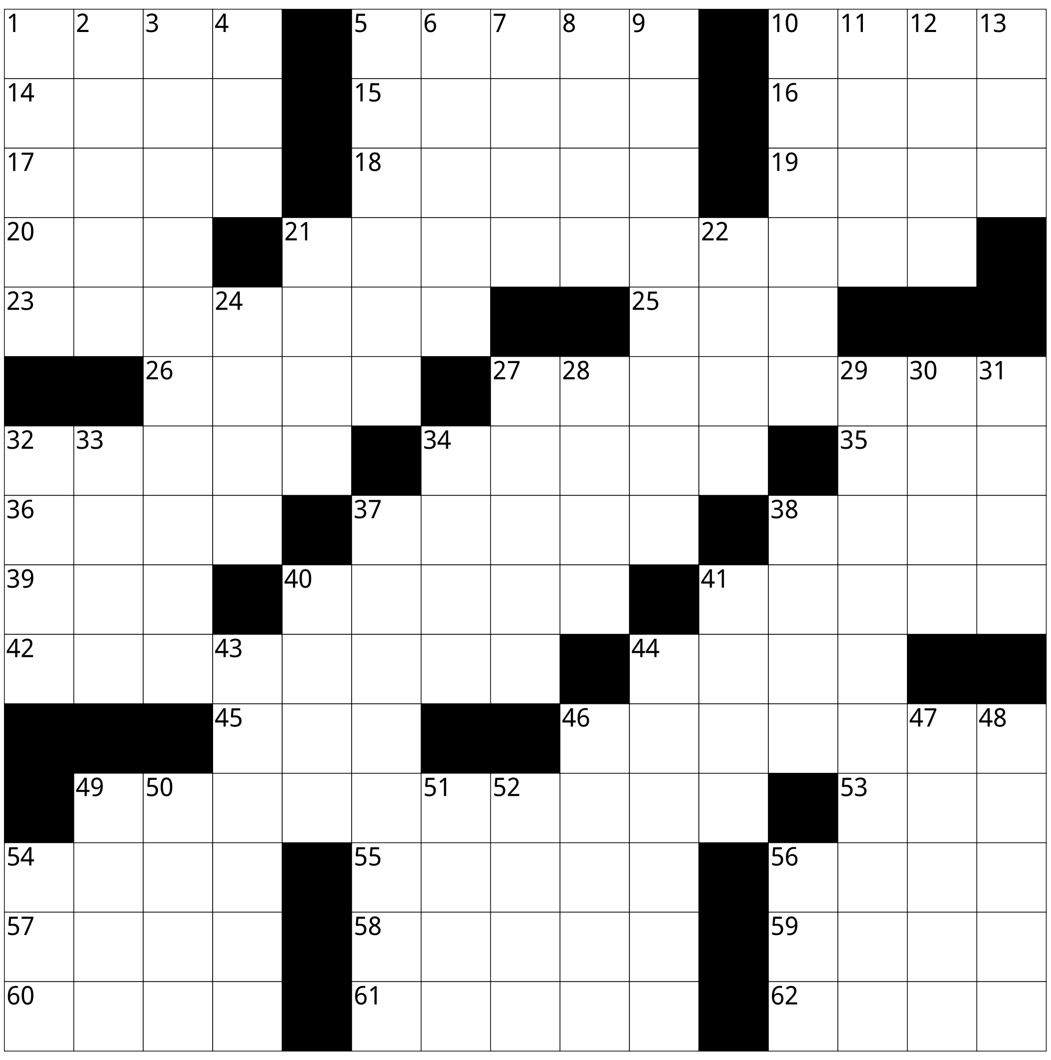
As people exited the Hepburn Zoo the show's high energy hung in the air. Many reminisced on the scenes they had just witnessed, bursting into laughter at the memory of them.

COURTESY PHOTO / AIUSTIN PANG

The cast of "The Truth Remixed."

Mixmatch

Avery Goldstein



ACROSS
1 Mimics
5 Scale, as a rock wall
10 "Severance" actor Scott
14 Mascara site
15 Musical ending
16 Lent
17 Creep (along)
18 Knoxville sch.
19 Radiate
20 Relative of Ramona and Beezus (44A)
21 Temperamental "Like a Prayer" singer before she made it big?
23 Dazzle
25 Fleeting trend
26 Simplicity
27 Red chili sauce named for a Thai town
32 Existential dread
34 Eye drops
35 Sharing word
36 Betty of cartoons
37 Thin pancake
38 Zip
39 Egg cells
40 Use an index for directions?
41 "You hit the nail on the head!"
42 ABBA's first hit
44 See 20A
45 Nancy Drew's boyfriend
46 Misheard expression that's logically plausible and a hint to this puzzle's starred clues
49 Ice cream drinks
53 Poseidon's realm
54 Yoda, for one
55 Ushered through the door
56 Slippery ___ eel
57 Home of Iowa State
58 Make ___ (get rich)
59 Blood line
60 Castle protector
61 What Red Bull gives you?
62 "___ mother used to say ..."

DOWN
1 Cover story
2 "The Hunger Games" nation
3 *Fugitive farm animal blamed for everything?
4 "Quiet!"
5 Word before Hub or Catalog, to a Middlebury student
6 Pear-shaped instruments
7 Tabloid twosome
8 Molecule in many COVID vaccines
9 *Flame that brings people closer?
10 Meeting outline
11 2017 Kendrick Lamar album
12 Reebok rival
13 Was introduced to
21 Nuisance
22 Boat propellers
24 Speak hoarsely
27 "___ evil ..."
28 Enthralled
29 Fifty-fifty flips
30 Like some juries
31 2012 Best Picture
32 Take ___ (respond to applause)
33 Exploding star
34 Peter, Paul and Mary, e.g.
37 *Frosty cabbage dish?
38 Most of a penny
40 Sch. for tots
41 Software glitches
43 Join the army
44 Athletes' negotiators
46 Squeezing (out)
47 Prepare to fire again
48 Job for Mrs. Doubtfire or Mary Poppins
49 Office note
50 Thought
51 Prefix with sphere
52 Deuce follower
54 Traffic tie-up
56 "Hacks" protagonist, Daniels

FIELD HOCKEY FALLS TO BOWDOIN IN SHOOTOUT

By **HANNAH FREUND**
Contributing Writer

COURTESY PHOTO / WILL COSTELLO

Izzy Redzic '27 and Middlebury's penalty corner unit on defense against Bowdoin.

The Middlebury field hockey team was eager to defeat the Bowdoin Polar Bears after their unexpected loss to the 23rd ranked Endicott College team the weekend prior. Shockingly, the normally unbeatable Panthers came up short again.

Middlebury Athletics estimated that 467 spectators were in attendance for Fall Family Weekend. Despite the pressure, the Panthers had seemed ready for the challenge.

"For me, the most exciting games are the ones that come with a lot of pressure," defender Tessa Herbst '28 told The Campus. "As a team, we welcome those challenges and enjoy facing them together."

Middlebury tallied the first goal of the game when midfielder Addie Chandler '29 scored in the beginning of the third quarter. But Bowdoin responded with an equalizer later in the quarter.

The game remained level throughout the fourth quarter, and the teams entered overtime tied 1–1. However, the pressure did not phase the squad.

"As the game moved into overtime, the pressure kept building, and that's when we really lean on each other and on our preparation. It's exciting to play such competitive conference games, and we're grateful for that opportunity as well as the pressure that comes along," Herbst wrote.

Starting goalie Izzy Redzic '27 worked hard to keep the ball out of the Panthers' net. After a scoreless double overtime and with fans on the edge of their seats, the game would be decided by a shootout.

Midfielder Megan Fuqua '27 made the first attempt for the Panthers, skillfully shifting the ball around the Bowdoin goalie and into the net. However, Middlebury couldn't score again and, with Bowdoin making two of their five shootout attempts, the Polar Bears walked away victorious.

"Every loss teaches us something new about ourselves that we didn't know before. This new knowledge will boost us in our preparation for next weekend," Herbst wrote.

Despite the disappointing result, the game statistics highlight the Panther's dominant presence on the field. Middlebury outshot Bowdoin 19 to 5, and succeeded in creating 14 penalty corners to the Polar Bears' four.

"Going forward, we need to continue developing our scoring opportunities and converting on them. I'm excited to see us capitalize on these chances, which is something that we'll definitely continue to work on in practice," Emma McNealy '28 wrote.

The meeting between the Panthers and the Polar Bears was Middlebury field hockey's fifth overtime game so far this season and finished with their second shootout of the year. They previously won a shootout against Hamilton College in their first NESCAC game of the season.

Despite the current dip in form, the Panthers recently had a reason to celebrate when the team beat Connecticut College 1–0 two weekends ago. The win marked Coach DeLorenzo's 400th career victory at the college, an impressive and hard-earned achievement. The team celebrated their leader's milestone by pouring gatorade over her head, waving homemade posters and gifting a bouquet of flowers.

"We're all so happy for her. 'Delo' has created such a special culture to be a part of and we're so lucky to have her," Fuqua wrote.

The Panthers will look to reassert their dominance as they hit the road this upcoming weekend, facing the Colby Mules and Wesleyan College.

"I'm also looking forward to these next few weekends with all conference games. Each game will be competitive, as is the nature of the NESCAC, and a great opportunity for us to challenge ourselves," McNealy wrote.

Regardless of their back-to-back losses, Middlebury remains motivated to finish their season strong.

"I know our team has so much potential, and I'm excited to make some tweaks we need to reach it. We still have plenty of big NESCAC games ahead, and we're excited to come out stronger and to play for hosting rights in the NESCAC tournament," Herbst wrote.

MIDDLEBURY SAILING CLUB HOSTS STUART WALKER TROPHY

By **SIMON SCHMIEDER**
Senior Sports Editor

SIMON SCHMIEDER / THE MIDDLEBURY CAMPUS

Middlebury's fleet of Flying Junior sailboats.

Swing left off Vermont Route 22A just shy of Vergennes, zigzag between old homesteads and silos along dirt roads and soon you will be tumbling towards Lake Champlain. Drive a little further and you will find a brown boathouse adorned with a blue pennant: the home of the Middlebury College Sailing Club.

On Saturday, Oct. 4, Middlebury hosted the 10th edition of the Stuart Walker Trophy, the college's annual home regatta. This year's event saw UMass Amherst, the University of New Hampshire, Williams College and Middlebury's team competing on the lake.

Eight knots of wind blew across Lake Champlain on Saturday morning, an adequate breeze for racing. In ideal conditions the A and B fleets of each team compete separately, with each respective fleet of boats sailing three times. Crucially, three full races are required for the results of the regatta to count for conference standing. Knowing that the wind was likely to weaken later in the day, the race organizers combined the fleets for the first two races.

Middlebury entered three teams, each with their own A and B fleets — six boats in total. Middlebury's first team A fleet, led by skipper Benson Chiles '26.5 and crew Isabelle Vagell '26.5, won the first two races among the 12-boat field.

A winning partnership of this sort demands strong chemistry and communication between sailors. The skipper, responsible for steering and trimming the mainsail, must work in tandem with the crew, the sailor at the front of the boat who handles the jib, dictates speed and controls boat balance. What's also special about the boat pairings is that they are co-ed, making sailing one of the few collegiate sports in which athletes of different genders compete together.

By the third race, though, there was little to no competition. As forecasted, the wind had died down and the sails of each boat now draped undisturbed. While towing the boat of Middlebury's earlier winning duo back to the dock, Vagell explained the team's next steps.

"We're gonna go back in and wait for about an hour and see what happens," Vagell said. "Here we either have a lot of wind or no wind, and not very often in between."

A frustrated wait ensued. The crucial third race was put on hold, resting at the mercy of the waning wind. Back on shore, though, the atmosphere did not reflect that of a regatta facing a premature end and voided results. Smoke billowed from a grill; hamburgers, chips, vegetables, cider donuts and homemade Middlebury sailboat-shaped sugar cookies sat spread out on a table; and sailors from each team treated themselves to the feast.

The cookout was more than a nice gesture by Middlebury parents and alumni, though. It was symbolic of the broader ethos of Middlebury's sailing team.

"None of the other teams really do a big barbecue like this, so we try to stand out and be the friendliest regatta," Toby Jennings '28 said.

Vagell echoed that.

"We try and be one of the friendliest teams in our league, if not the friendliest… we have more team friends than team rivals," she said.

The friendliness extends to the water, where Middlebury emphasizes fair sailing. Jennings explained that "the main rule is no contact between boats," but if a collision does occur, the offending team must acknowledge the incident and do two penalty spins before proceeding. However, if the sailors believe the contact was not their boat's fault, they can file a protest after the race.

"I think there's a balance between resolving things on the water and being a good sport … but also if someone does foul you, you should call them out for it," Aric Duncan '27.5 said, alluding to the hearings that can occur after a race to address boat contact. Resembling a court trial, sailors protest to a committee boat immediately after the race. Both teams involved submit documents describing the incident, witnesses are called and the coaches from all teams ultimately reach a verdict.

Competitors generally avoid escalating to a hearing, especially at a friendlier regatta like the Stuart Walker Trophy. Resolving disputes on the water is the preferred means of justice, and opposing sailors trust each other to follow an implicit honor code while racing.

After all, who would want to be that guy at a venue like Middlebury's? The tranquility of the Arnold Bay entrance to Lake Champlain coupled with the pensive Adirondack Mountains spanning across the horizon tends to discourage disagreement.

"What we like to say, and I think a lot of people agree, is that we have one of the prettiest venues in college sailing," Duncan said.

Middlebury is lucky to have such a venue given the spectrum of sailing conditions it can offer: high and low winds, choppy and still water, and a range of sailing routes. Lake Champlain is a prized location, and still has enough water to sail amid the current drought, a privilege some colleges lack.

Possibly most meaningful, though, are the personal and athletic connections that form out on Lake Champlain.

"I think [sailing] is probably one of the sports where you're most in tune with the natural world. You're just harnessing the water, harnessing the wind, and using that to help you make decisions to win," Duncan said.

This reality of the sport also means that sailors are particularly at the whim of nature, and on Saturday, the regatta officials eventually called the competition early after the wind ceased to cooperate. Far from expressing regret, though, the sailors, parents and regatta committee did not mind. It seems most days at Middlebury's Panton, Vermont sailing pavilion are days well spent.

FOOTBALL DROPS HOME GAME TO AMHERST

By GEORGE MADISON
Contributing Writer

COURTESY PHOTO / WILL COSTELLO

Wide receiver Gus Parker '27 receives the football for the Pantherssceives the football for the Panthers.

This Fall Family Weekend, just over 3600 fans packed into Alumni stadium and the surrounding hills for Middlebury football's fourth game of the season. The Panthers entered the contest riding a two game win streak after a successful weekend on the road at Colby.

The Panthers received the opening kickoff to begin the game. However, Amherst quickly turned the momentum in their favor, recovering the football on Middlebury's 15-yard line after a strip sack on Middlebury's opening drive. The Mammoths capitalized on the play with a three-yard rushing touchdown for the game's first tally. After a Middlebury three-and-out, Amherst went on to finish the quarter with a 10-play, 64-yard drive to go up by 14 points.

At the start of the second quarter, Matthew Piechota '27 came away with a significant interception, bringing the Panthers faithfully to their feet. Later in the quarter, Middlebury advanced into Mammoth territory following a 40-yard reception by Mike Ahonen '26. The Panthers failed to convert on third and 11, but came away with a 28-yard field goal from Tony Wang '26. Amherst responded with a field goal of their own to close out the half up 14.

"Amherst was a very good team. Their QB was talented and made multiple key plays for them," defensive back Charlie Grant '27 said, describing the first half. "It's a great reminder of how balanced the league is — we need to come ready to play every Saturday."

Amherst scored on successive drives to start the second half, taking a 27–3 lead. Middlebury responded in the fourth quarter with a seven-play, 75-yard drive that culminated in a 23-yard touchdown reception by Parker Loupessis '27 — the first of the junior wideout's career.

On the Panthers' next drive, Brian Moran '26 found Gus Parker '27 for a 28-yard touchdown, bringing Parker to a career-high nine receptions for 88 yards.

With only 1:57 to play and down by 10, Middlebury would need a Herculean comeback to secure a win. A flicker of hope came when Moran found Brian Olson '28 for 39 yards, coming within just 14 yards of the Amherst endzone, but a fumble recovered by Amherst sealed the Panthers' fate. The Mammoths took a knee to come away with a 27–17 victory, bringing Middlebury to a 2–2 season record.

While the loss at home was a tough blow for Middlebury's NESCAC hopes, the team was proud of their fight and could leave the game with some positives.

"Our effort and competitiveness were never in question. When you get into holes, the easy way out is to quit. That's never an option with this team. We continued to fight and got ourselves in a position to have a chance near the end," Grant remarked.

"Defensively, we did a better job containing the quarterback. Our goal is to get the ball back to our offense, we know the playmakers we have on that side of the ball," linebacker Michael Votta '27 added.

The Panthers go on the road next week to face a 3–1 Williams team in a must-win game. Middlebury must avoid another slow start while maintaining their high end-of-game energy to position themselves for a victory. The kickoff is at 2:00 p.m. next Saturday in Williamstown.

PANTHER SOCCER TEAMS STUMBLE AGAINST BOWDOIN

By THEO MANIATIS & THIE HARTONO
Sports Editor & Contributing Writer

Men's and women's soccer took to the pitch this past Saturday on fields adorned with fall foliage. Family Weekend brought a lighthearted crowd: Families and dogs sprawled out on the grass to watch the Panthers take on Bowdoin.

The women's match kicked off at 11 a.m. and the Panthers dominated possession for most of the game, creating more chances than their opponents. Still, they found themselves down two goals late, a deficit they were unable to overcome.

After an opening 18 minutes that saw the two teams share equal possession of the ball, the Polar Bears drew first blood as they capitalized on a free kick from the edge of the box. The stunning shot curled into the top left corner, beyond the reach of Middlebury goalkeeper and co-captain Livia Davidson '26.

The Panthers made early substitutions, bringing in reinforcements to bolster the midfield. They mostly kept the ball to themselves the remainder of the period, playing in Bowdoin's end and mounting pressure on their backline.

Despite the offensive pressure, the Panthers failed to find the back of the net. Crosses into the box were scooped up or landed out of reach of the attacking runs. At the half-hour mark, Roshann Purcell '26 rattled the crossbar from 35 yards out. Ten minutes later, Sarah Hall '29 thumped the right goalpost with a looping volley from inside the box.

With their starters back on the pitch, the Panthers sustained their attacking pressure in the second half.

In the 58th minute, Carolina Espinosa '26 cleverly slipped the ball through a defender's legs and found herself through on goal, but her strike proved an easy stop for the goalkeeper.

Bowdoin's second goal came halfway through the period when a rogue cross into the Middlebury box took a cruel deflection off a defender, landing in the back of the net.

Down two, the Panthers didn't throw in the towel but played with renewed urgency, fighting desperately for every ball. Middlebury finally broke through with 13 minutes remaining. From a free kick taken short, Stella Espinasse '27 flicked the ball into the box, connecting with Purcell, who tapped it home.

The Panthers battled admirably to the final whistle, but an equalizer remained out of reach.

"I think that we had moments of great soccer during the game, but also mistakes in key areas on the field that led to the result," Davidson said.

"We are a passionate, unbelievably hardworking team, who I think really wants to win … we just need to find that chip on our shoulder again," Fiona Linnau '28, NESCAC Player of the Week, said.

A similar story unfolded for the men's team, who celebrated their senior day on the field before the 12 p.m. kickoff.

Middlebury's opponent, Bowdoin, has shown mediocre performance all season. They are coached by Scott Wiercinski '99, a two-time All-NESCAC goalkeeper for Middlebury. Unfortunately for the Panthers, however, his allegiances no longer lie in Vermont.

Bowdoin broke the deadlock with three minutes left in the half. A ball into the box found the feet of a Bowdoin forward, who slipped it by the Middlebury keeper.

After regrouping under the shade of a nearby tree during halftime, the Panthers were able to improve in the second half, yet they still struggled to find the net despite numerous chances. The final whistle blew, signaling Middlebury's third 1–0 loss in a row.

Admittedly, the Panthers were unlucky on Saturday. They outshot and out-cornered Bowdoin, a recurring theme this year. But no matter how you spin it, Bowdoin still outscored. The loss puts Middlebury out of NESCAC playoffs, at least for now.

"We have to be more opportunistic," head coach Alex Elias said, reflecting on their offensive struggles. "We have to be hungrier."

On Sunday, a fired-up Middlebury squad faced Thomas College. Elias' message had made an impact. The visitors took an ominous lead with over a minute gone, but Middlebury responded with seven unanswered goals, three coming in the first half.

Quinn Pappendick '28 notched a career-best two goals; his second was a curler that found the top left corner from 18 yards out. Dylan Payne '28.5 followed shortly after with a close-range volley to cap off the scoring. Hopefully they saved a few goals for next week, too.

Although the game has no NESCAC implications, it could serve as a critical turning point in the Panthers' playoff push.

"This is not how we looked to go into the season," Alem Hadzic '26 said after the game. "But ultimately, this is what good teams do: you adjust to the setbacks and challenges."

The Panthers have five games remaining — all against NESCAC teams — to make the playoffs. Reflecting on those crucial games, Elias said, "We've got to be desperate to keep playing together. We've got a really good group. We have a really close community of players and families here. We owe it to ourselves to give ourselves the best chance to play as long as possible."

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The powerful Quinn Pappendick '28 for Middlebury.

COURTESY PHOTO / ANNA SAWIN